



**TOP MANAGEMENT STRATEGISING PRACTICES AND  
THINKING STYLES:  
A CASE STUDY OF A SOUTH AFRICAN RETAILER**

by

**ERVINE SELATI LITLHOKOE KEKANA**

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**Supervisor: Dr K. Stander**

**Co-supervisor: Prof N. Sewdass**

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

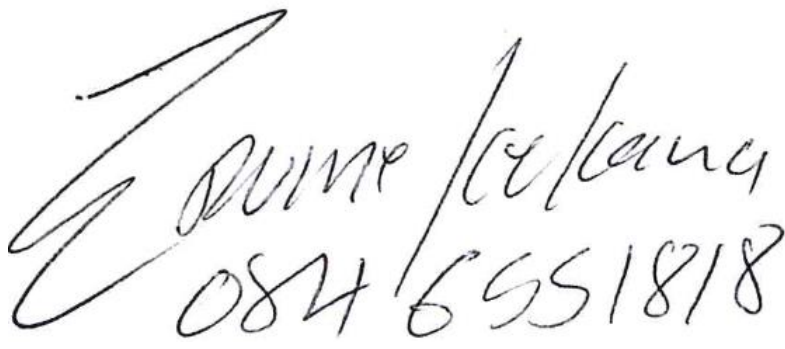
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### COLLEGE OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

I (full names & surname):	Ervine Selati Litlhokoe Kekana
Student number:	32381271

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## ABSTRACT

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*“We tend to think of the mind of an organisation residing in the ... top management ...but... [strategic] intelligence is not organised in a centralised structure but much more like a beehive of small simple components...” Kevin Kelly, (1994: 166283).*

From the quote above, it is implied that the strategising practices of, among others, top managers, are the ‘small simple components’ that build towards the overall strategy of an organisation. The overall strategy of any organisation directly influences the performance thereof. As strategists, top managers use their thinking styles to influence the new strategic practices they endorse and those that are discarded, thereby impacting the competitive strategy employed by the organisation and ultimately organisational performance. This study investigated the rapport between the strategising practices used by top managers and their thinking styles.

Based on a single illustrative case, this study utilised mixed data obtained from 33 interviews and 79 questionnaires to describe the possible relationship between thinking styles and strategising practices. The results show that at the case organisation, thinking styles of top managers differ depending on the situation in which they find themselves. A possible relationship between thinking styles and strategising practices, at the case organisation, is further implied.

**Keywords:** top management; strategists; strategy practitioners; strategising practices; thinking styles; choice-making; Thinking Styles Inventory; discursive practices.

*THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS THE DIRECT TRANSLATION OF THE ABOVE ABSTRACT INTO SOUTHERN NDEBELE – MY FATHER’S HOME LANGUAGE*

*“Se taele go nagana ge monagano we mokhadlo lo o hlala e tulu, mara lehlelo le go hlaganepha le ga bekwa ge Ndlela le ngore esekhathi, mara kgulu go fana ne lekhaya le tenosi le le le gase bodese le lengane.” Kevin Kelly, (1994:166283).*

*Go leso setsopolwe e tulu, era gore tedlela te go hlela, go leto te khona, baphathi ba se tulu, geto tedo te tengane leto te gase bodese le to te akha lehlelo gemoga le*

*mokhadlo. Lehlelo gemoga le mokhadlo o monye na o monye le dlolela e go etene ge tedo. Jene ge bahleli, baphathi ba setulu ba beregesa tedlela tabo te go nagana, go tshwaetja tedlela te tetsha leto ba te vumelago na leto ba te kganago. Ge go eta jalo te thella lehlelo lelo le phalesanago lelo lele beregeswe mokhadlo, e maphellweni na lesa mokhadlo o se yetago. Go bala lokhu, go ete gore go be ne go vesesana e khathe ge tedlela te go hlela leto te beregeswa mbaphathi ba setulu ne Ndlela leyo ba nagana gayo.*

*Go beka nnye ye tedlela leto ba te beregeselelo, go beregeswe tedaba leto te phoma go 33 ye bado labo be ba butiswa go kereya lesa be ba fona go seva ne mebotiso e 79 leyo e hlalosa nkgonagalo ye go talana e khathe ge mehuda ye go nagana ne ndlela leyo go hlelwa gayo. Mephomela e bonesa gore lapho e mekhadlweni, Ndlela ye go nagana ge baphathi ba setulu e ya phabana go ya ge gore ba te kereya ba se sejamweni se se jane. Nkgonagalo ye bodlelwano e khathe ge Ndlela ye go nagana ne lenaneo le le le ladelwago e tedweni te nhlagano, te beregeselwe.*

**Mave e bohlogwa:** *Bophathi ba setulu, bakgoni be go hlela, baberegi be go hlela, tedlela leto go hlelwa gato, Ndlela leyo go naganwa gayo; go khetha, mekgwa ye go nagana ge botalo, tedlela te go suga endabeni ennye goya go ennye.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>XII</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS &amp; ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>XIV</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH ORIENTATION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2 BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 RATIONALE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.3.1 Previous research .....	6
1.3.2 Importance and benefits of the proposed research .....	8
<b>1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.5 PURPOSE STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.6.1 Research questions .....	11
1.6.2 Research objectives.....	11
<b>1.7 DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.7.1 Delimitations .....	12
1.7.2 Assumptions .....	12
<b>1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.9 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>14</b>
1.9.1 Strategising practices.....	14
1.9.2 Thinking styles when strategising.....	16
1.9.3 Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) .....	18
<b>1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>22</b>
1.10.1 Research philosophy .....	23
1.10.2 Methodological approach .....	23
1.10.3 Sources of data.....	24
1.10.4 Research design associated with Research Question 1 .....	25
1.10.5 Research design associated with Research Question 2.....	28
1.10.6 Research design associated with Research Question 3.....	29
<b>1.11 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
1.11.1 The questionnaire .....	31

1.11.2	The interview schedule .....	31
<b>1.12</b>	<b>UNIT OF ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>32</b>
1.12.1	Sampling strategies .....	33
1.12.2	Administration of the data collection.....	33
<b>1.13</b>	<b>ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>34</b>
1.13.1	Confidentiality .....	34
1.13.2	Informed consent letter .....	34
<b>1.14</b>	<b>CHAPTER BREAKDOWN .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>1.15</b>	<b>CHAPTER SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2:</b>	<b>STRATEGISING PRACTICES AND THINKING STYLES .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>STRATEGISING PRACTICES .....</b>	<b>39</b>
2.2.1	Limitations of strategising practices.....	43
2.2.2	Social practices.....	44
2.2.3	Top management interaction .....	45
2.2.4	Socialisation practices .....	47
2.2.5	Artefacts and visual representation .....	49
2.2.6	Emerging patterns.....	51
2.2.7	Choice making.....	51
2.2.8	Modes of strategising practices.....	52
2.2.9	Summary of strategising practices .....	53
<b>2.3</b>	<b>COGNITIVE CONTINUUM THEORY .....</b>	<b>54</b>
2.3.1	Sternberg (1988) theory of mental self-government .....	56
<b>2.4</b>	<b>THINKING STYLES .....</b>	<b>58</b>
2.4.1	Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) (Sternberg & Wagner, 1992) .....	60
2.4.2	Thinking styles and mental capacity.....	68
2.4.3	Thinking styles and problem solving.....	68
2.4.4	Thinking styles and strategic thinking.....	69
2.4.5	Thinking styles and correlations .....	69
2.4.6	Thinking psychology literature.....	69
2.4.7	Choice making .....	70
2.4.8	Valuable alternatives to thinking styles.....	72
<b>2.5</b>	<b>CHAPTER SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3:</b>	<b>CONTEXT PRACTICES, SA RETAIL INDUSTRY AND THE RETAIL ORGANISATION .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO PRACTICE THEORY CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>76</b>
3.2.1	Multiple views of various practice theories .....	77
<b>3.3</b>	<b>PRACTICE TURN AND PRACTICE MOVEMENT CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>78</b>

3.3.1	The Strategy-as-Practice domain perspective .....	80
<b>3.4</b>	<b>SOUTH AFRICAN RETAIL INDUSTRY CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>82</b>
3.4.1	South African economy compared to the global market and the USA GDP ..	83
3.4.2	Oligopolistic key players.....	84
3.4.3	Industry statistics context.....	84
3.4.4	E-commerce and online retailing.....	84
3.4.5	Informal retail market .....	85
3.4.6	Risks to be considered by top management.....	85
3.4.7	Other retail industry related studies.....	86
<b>3.5</b>	<b>THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>CHAPTER SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4:</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY .....</b>	<b>92</b>
4.3.1	Pragmatism as a research philosophy .....	92
4.3.2	Constructivist research philosophy.....	94
4.3.3	Deductive research approach .....	95
<b>4.4</b>	<b>RESEARCH PARADIGM .....</b>	<b>95</b>
4.4.1	What is a research paradigm? .....	95
<b>4.5</b>	<b>MIXED METHOD INQUIRY STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>98</b>
4.5.1	Research methods.....	98
4.5.2	Mixed data sources.....	99
4.5.3	Data triangulation.....	100
<b>4.6</b>	<b>QUANTITATIVE METHOD.....</b>	<b>101</b>
4.6.1	Quantitative: Research population .....	101
4.6.2	Quantitative: Sampling strategies.....	102
4.6.3	Quantitative: Pilot study .....	103
4.6.4	Quantitative: Demographic Data .....	103
4.6.5	Quantitative: Questionnaire Respondents.....	103
4.6.6	Quantitative: Data collection .....	104
4.6.7	Quantitative: Data analysis .....	105
4.6.8	Quantitative: Limitations.....	107
4.6.9	Quantitative: Quality and rigour.....	108
<b>4.7</b>	<b>QUALITATIVE METHOD .....</b>	<b>113</b>
4.7.1	Qualitative: Research population .....	113
4.7.2	Qualitative: Sampling strategies.....	113
4.7.3	Qualitative: Pilot study .....	114
4.7.4	Qualitative: Demographics data .....	114



4.7.5	Qualitative: Interview participants.....	114
4.7.6	Qualitative: Basis for interview schedule .....	114
4.7.7	Qualitative: Data analysis.....	117
4.7.8	Qualitative: Literature review relevance to the interviews .....	117
4.7.9	Qualitative: Data analysis.....	118
4.7.10	Qualitative: Limitations .....	119
4.7.11	Qualitative: Authenticity and trustworthiness .....	120
<b>4.8</b>	<b>ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>121</b>
4.8.1	Confidentiality .....	121
4.8.2	Informed consent letter .....	121
<b>4.9</b>	<b>CHAPTER SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5:</b>	<b>PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>THE UNITS OF ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>125</b>
5.2.1	Quantitative : Description of questionnaire respondents.....	125
5.2.2	Qualitative: Description of interview participants .....	128
<b>5.3</b>	<b>QUANTITATIVE DATA - FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>132</b>
5.3.1	Quantitative data - Frequency of strategising practices.....	132
5.3.2	Quantitative data - Scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha) .....	134
5.3.3	Quantitative data - t-test, the mean and standard deviation .....	137
5.3.4	Quantitative data - One sample t-test.....	142
<b>5.4</b>	<b>QUALITATIVE DATA – FINDINGS ON CEO .....</b>	<b>145</b>
5.4.1	Qualitative data on strategising practices by CEO.....	145
<b>5.5</b>	<b>QUALITATIVE DATA ON STRATEGISING PRACTICES.....</b>	<b>162</b>
5.5.1	Qualitative findings on strategising practices.....	162
5.5.2	Qualitative - participants' perceptions on situational thinking.....	163
<b>5.6</b>	<b>THE PROFILE OF TOP MANAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>172</b>
5.6.1	Survey respondents profile (Quantitative data) .....	172
5.6.2	Interview participant profile (qualitative) .....	180
<b>5.7</b>	<b>CHAPTER SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6:</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>199</b>
6.1.1	Summary of data collected.....	199
6.1.2	Research objective 1 .....	207
6.1.3	Research objective 2 .....	209
6.1.4	Research objective 3 .....	211
<b>6.2</b>	<b>DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>213</b>
6.2.1	Organisational profile using TSI .....	215

6.2.2	Discussing top management respondents based on TSI.....	216
6.2.3	Thinking styles changed under three different situations.....	217
6.2.4	Findings on strategising practices used by top management .....	223
6.2.5	Rapport between the units of observation .....	226
<b>6.3</b>	<b>RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION .....</b>	<b>228</b>
6.3.1	Five contributions made by the study .....	229
<b>6.4</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>231</b>
6.4.1	Recommendations for future research .....	231
6.4.2	Recommendations for the focal organisation .....	234
6.4.3	Recommendations for top management .....	235
<b>6.5</b>	<b>CHAPTER SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>6.6</b>	<b>PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>239</b>
6.6.1	Organisational implications .....	239
6.6.2	New recruits into top management.....	240
6.6.3	Theoretical Implications .....	241
<b>6.7</b>	<b>CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>243</b>
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>246</b>
	<b>APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE SURVEY .....</b>	<b>260</b>
	<b>APPENDIX B: LETTER TO DR ANGELA MURPHY.....</b>	<b>261</b>
	<b>APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER.....</b>	<b>263</b>
	<b>APPENDIX D: INSTRUMENT – ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE.....</b>	<b>264</b>
	<b>APPENDIX E: THINKING STYLES CATEGORIES AND EXPLANATION.....</b>	<b>274</b>
	<b>APPENDIX F: MANAGEMENT STRATEGISING PRACTICES .....</b>	<b>275</b>
	<b>APPENDIX G: INSTRUMENT – THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.....</b>	<b>276</b>
	<b>APPENDIX I: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE .....</b>	<b>284</b>
	<b>APPENDIX J: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT .....</b>	<b>286</b>
	<b>APPENDIX K: CODES FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>287</b>
	<b>APPENDIX L: PROFILE B -TOP MANAGEMENT THINKING STYLES AND STRATEGISING PRACTICES.....</b>	<b>288</b>
	<b>APPENDIX M: PROFILE C - TOP MANAGEMENT THINKING STYLES AND STRATEGISING PRACTICES.....</b>	<b>290</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Terms central to this research study .....	13
Table 1.2: A short version of the TSI.....	21
Table 1.3: Research methods associated with Research Question 1 .....	26
Table 1.4: Research methods associated with research question 2.....	28
Table 2.1: Strategising practices.....	41
Table 2.2: Examples of socialisation practices.....	48
Table 2.3: Examples of artefacts .....	50
Table 2.4: Summary modes of top management strategising practices .....	53
Table 2.5: Expanded version of the TSI.....	63
Table 2.6: Thinking styles and Intellectual styles .....	65
Table 2.7: Overview of thinking styles literature.....	67
Table 2.8: Past, present and future thinking time perspectives .....	71
Table 3.1: S-as-P and related traditions in strategy institutional research .....	81
Table 3.2: Typology of S-as-P by type of practitioner and level of praxis .....	82
Table 3.3: Four reasons for choice of retail organisation.....	88
Table 4.1: Systematic approach to the study .....	91
Table 4.2: Quantitative method - questionnaire anomaly .....	101
Table 4.3: Recruitment of both the respondents and participants .....	102
Table 4.4: Respondents and participants inclusion criteria .....	104
Table 4.5: Questionnaire - Instrument administration.....	104
Table 4.6: Specific analyses relevant to the study .....	105
Table 4.7: Scale reliabilities and corresponding question numbers.....	111
Table 4.8: Correlation of the theory of mental self-government.....	112
Table 4.9: Qualitative method – interviews anomalies .....	113
Table 4.10: Interviews - step-by-step.....	116
Table 5.1: Demographics - technical questions for the questionnaire respondents.....	126
Table 5.2: Quantitative - Demographic question 5 questionnaire .....	127
Table 5.3: Demographic section - technical questions for the interview participants .....	128
Table 5.4: Demographic question B6 – interview participants.....	129
Table 5.5: Strategising practices commonly used by questionnaire respondents.....	133
Table 5.6: Cronbach's alpha reliability for the TSI.....	135
Table 5.7: Adaptation of the 7-point Likert scale .....	136
Table 5.8: T-test – One sample statistics.....	139
Table 5.9: T-test – One sample statistics.....	141

Table 5.10: Effect sizes .....	142
Table 5.11: One sample test.....	144
Table 5.12: Interviewees on the strategising practices.....	162
Table 5.13: Dominant thinking during normal operations .....	165
Table 5.14: Thinking during a crisis event.....	166
Table 5.15: Thinking when grouped at an organisational level.....	168
Table 5.16: Cross-tabulation of the three lists with strategising practices .....	169
Table 5.17: Cross-tabulation of the three lists with strategising practices .....	170
Table 5.18: Cross-tabulation of the three lists with strategising practices .....	171
Table 5.19: Profile D - Top managers' thinking styles and strategising practices .....	175
Table 5.20: Top three thinking styles and the respective strategising practices -Dominant	182
Table 5.21: Top three thinking styles and the respective strategising practices - Crisis .....	184
Table 5.22: Top three thinking styles and the respective strategising practices - Organisational	187
Table 5.23: Profile of top management the participants changing situation to strategising practices .....	191
Table 5.24: Profile A - Top managers' thinking styles and strategising practices (qualitative) .....	193
Table 5.25: Profile B – Profile Top 3 thinking styles and top 3 strategising practices .....	195
Table 5.26: Profile C - Top managers' thinking styles and changing situations (interviews)	196
Table 6.1: Summary of top management respondents thinking styles .....	201
Table 6.2: Summary of top management strategising practices.....	204
Table 6.3: Research Objective 1 and findings.....	207
Table 6.4: Research Objective 2 and findings.....	209
Table 6.5: Research Objective 3 and findings.....	211
Table 6.6: Changing thinking styles based on three situations.....	221

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Structure – Chapter 1 .....	1
Figure 1.2: Research logic applied in this study .....	22
Figure 1.3: Non-sequential phases of the mixed data sources .....	24
Figure 1.4: Chapter breakdown of the entire study .....	36
Figure 2.1: Structure – Chapter 2 .....	38
Figure 2.2: Thinking styles and strategising practices impact strategic choices .....	42
Figure 2.3: Structural context for top management's choice making .....	43
Figure 2.4: Discursive multi-modal rhetorical strategy practices .....	49
Figure 2.5: Continuum of cognitive style .....	55
Figure 2.6: Selected theories pivotal the study in one view .....	59
Figure 3.1: Structure – Chapter 3 .....	75
Figure 3.2: Context practice theory, SA retail industry and the organisation .....	75
Figure 3.3: Multiple views that flow from practice theories .....	78
Figure 3.4: Practices, activities and impact .....	80
Figure 4.1: Structure – Chapter 4 .....	90
Figure 5.1: The flow of topics for the chapter .....	123
Figure 5.2: Data sources and the data interpretation model .....	125
Figure 5.3: Involved with the strategising practices question B8 .....	128
Figure 5.4: Interview question B8 - the use of strategising practices .....	131
Figure 5.5: The quantitative aspects: Questionnaire .....	132
Figure 5.6: The Qualitative aspect of the model: Interviews .....	145
Figure 5.7: Profile on top management respondent's use of strategising practices (TSI) .	178
Figure 5.8: Profile summary of top management respondents practices and thinking .....	179
Figure 5.9: Qualitative – Executive thinking style and practices (Dominant) .....	183
Figure 5.10:      Perspective of Top thinking style (Dominant) .....	183
Figure 5.11:      Qualitative – Hierarchical thinking style and practices (Crisis) .....	185
Figure 5.12:      Perspective of Top thinking style (Crisis) .....	185
Figure 5.13:      Qualitative – Executive thinking style and practices (Organisational) .....	188
Figure 5.14:      Perspective of Top thinking style (Organisational) .....	189
Figure 6.1: The flow of topics for the chapter .....	198
Figure 6.2: The data interpretation model .....	200
Figure 6.3: The flow of topics for the discussion of findings on Research question 1 .....	214
Figure 6.4: The flow of topics on findings on Research Question 2 .....	222
Figure 6.5: Findings on Research Question 3 .....	226
Figure 6.6: Profile of the retail organisation - strategising practices and thinking styles ....	238



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## ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

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The following abbreviations are used throughout the dissertation:

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CCT	Cognitive Continuum Theory
CCTV	Close circuit television
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEO	Chief Executive Office (refer to TM)
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSI	Cognitive Style Index
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid (true identity)
GDP	Gross domestic product
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
IBM	International Business Machines
MANOVA	Multifactor Analysis of Variance
MBTI	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
MBV	Market-Based View
MSG	Mental self-Government
PBV	Practice-Based View
RBV	Resource-Based View
RO	Research Objective
RQ	Research Question
S-as-P	Strategy-as-practice
SAPP	Strategy Processes and Practices
SA	South Africa/n
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TM	Top Manager (refer to CEO)
TSI	Thinking Styles Inventory
UNISA	University of South Africa

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## CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH ORIENTATION

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Figure 1.1 presents the structure of this chapter.



**Figure 1.1: Structure – Chapter 1**



In business “... *the object of strategy is to bring about the conditions most [favourable] to one's own side, judging precisely the right moment to attack or withdraw and always assessing the limits of compromise... [W]hat marks the mind of the strategist is an intellectual elasticity or flexibility that enables [one] to come up with realistic responses to changing situations, not simply to discriminate with great precision among different shades of grey...*” (Ohmae 1982, quoted by Haywood, 1990:72).

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The above quote implies that the mind of a strategist determines the direction of the organisation. Allinson and Hayes (2012:12) re-established the link between the mind of a strategist and the direction of an organisation through developing the Cognitive Style Index (CSI). The CSI maps the ‘intellectual elasticity or flexibility’, and in this study, it is contrasted against the choices of strategising practices of a strategist. It is the strategising practices preferred by a strategist, that will eventually determine the direction of an organisation (Kelly, 1994: 166283). When determining this direction, strategists are ‘doing’ strategy, where at times, thinking precedes ‘doing’ (a deliberate strategy), or thinking replaces ‘learning’ (an emergent strategy), both of which can be observed during a business cycle (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 1998:11; Iranzadeh & Amlashi, 2013:341).

Top managers, as strategists, are categorised as novice and complex thinkers (experts). This differentiation is visible in the application of the CSI, where top managers are seen as having a ‘singular construct of thinking’. Singular construct thinking is considered critical thinking that is reliant on an individual’s mental capacity (Cervone & Pervin, 2015:347). Although there is no ‘second construct system’ related to advanced thinking, it only becomes ‘more complex’ as new additional skills are acquired (ibid.). Defining what the role of a strategist is in an organisation is a continuous effort, which has led to ‘thinking’ being included in a generic job description of a strategist by Vaara and Durand (2012:248).

When top management apply strategic thinking, they solve strategy challenges by applying convergent solutions and using their logic. Other options to how top managers solve strategy problems include the application of cognitive processes and

innovative plans (Salih & Alnaji, 2014:1877; Bonn, 2004:337). Central to this viewpoint are their thought processes, which Allinson and Hayes (2012:2) suggest are influenced by top management's preferred manner of considering and evaluating input. For the purposes of this study, these are referred to as 'thinking styles'. Various authors have argued that the application of 'thinking styles' could influence the direction of organisational strategy and the attainment of a sustainable competitive advantage (Coyne, 1986:54; Iranzadeh & Amlashi, 2013:341).

The ability to compete generally occurs in a competitive cycle when top management rank their company ahead of their competition (Iranzadeh & Amlashi, 2013:340; Porter, 1998). Competition in the industry in which the case organisation operates, namely the South African retail industry, intensified when a well-known American retailer entered the local market in 2012. The growing number of online shopping platforms (Gauteng Province, 2012:29) further compounded the competition. In addition, the sharp increase in informal traders, as well as various macro-economic factors that affect disposable income, such as the rising cost of utilities, labour strike action and the falling value of the South African currency, all served to intensify competition in the industry (Gauteng Province, 2012:29).

As a result, retail organisations started focusing on advancing their supply chain systems, improving technologies to enhance the customer experience, securing market share, and improving operational efficiencies (Euro Monitor International, 2015; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2012). Operational efficiencies are essential for superior performance as they shift the productivity frontier outwards, essentially driving the imitation of best practices across industries (Iranzadeh & Amlashi, 2013:341; Porter, 1996:10). Although these imitations of practices erode any possible competitive advantages, Iranzadeh and Amlashi (2013:341) suggest the answer to this erosion is for managers to be continuous innovative thinkers.

This study explored the rapport between top management strategising practices and thinking styles, based on an illustrative case study of a South African retailer. The study was conducted from the Strategy-as-Practice (S-as-P) research perspective and was grounded in the individual experiences of top managers (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:923; Seidl & Whittington, 2014:1407). The grounding in the individual top management experiences was explored using interviews, where top managers

explained their thinking and strategising practices, which was appropriate for a discursive study.

A discursive study is part of conversation analysis and it uses the discursive practices of the lexical, prosodic and syntax elements to focus on the constructed nature of discourse (Mitchel, 2017). The study focused on the common vocabulary used by top managers at the case organisation when they communicated their strategies.

The background and rationale of the study are presented in the next section. The research problem, the research objectives and importance of this study are subsequently discussed, followed by a brief review of the relevant literature and an overview of the methodology. The chapter is ended with a brief chapter outline of the remainder of the chapters of this dissertation.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND**

Management typically use processes and anticipatory activities to confront the task of making sense of the present situation (Liebl & Schwarz, 2010:313). In this study, they also interpret the weak signals of change in their environments. The way top management think about the challenges of today allows them to plan better by using reliable strategising practices. When applied, some of these practices could help legitimise the organisational strategy (Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere, & Vaara, 2013:18; Porter, 1996:11), while other practices incorrectly applied, could constrain or disable strategy-making (Vaara & Durand, 2012:258). What were under review in this study were top management's use of strategising practices and the application of their thinking styles.

Murphy (2006:27) argues that thinking styles are higher-order personality traits that explain the thinking patterns followed by individuals when making decisions. Thinking styles have been used further to demonstrate of the misalignment between the day-to-day management practices and general strategic management theory (Murphy 2006:28, Worren, Moore & Elliott, 2002:1228; Karakas, 2011:198).

In this study, theory is defined as an ordered set of assertions about a generic behaviour or structure that is assumed to hold throughout a broad range of specific situations (Wacker, 1998:364). Furthermore, a theory can be viewed as a system of

constructs and variables in which constructs are related to each other by propositions and the variables are related to each other by hypotheses (Bacharach, 1989).

The thinking styles applied in this study are those of the Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) developed by Sternberg and Wagner (1992), which in turn is based on Sternberg's (1988) research. The TSI classifies the thinking styles of top managers along five dimensions, namely, the function, form, level, scope, and direction of lean of thinking (Sternberg, 1988).

### **1.3 RATIONALE**

Thinking styles are embedded in the personal identities of top managers, which are in turn shaped by their own personal experiences and their social dynamics (Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007:3). In the social sciences, 'embeddedness' is defined as the dependence of a phenomenon on its environment, which may be defined in institutional, social, cognitive, or cultural terms (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013). Thinking styles are a contributing factor to the shaping of strategy and the attainment of the organisational competitive advantage (Harypursat, 2006; Angwin, Paroutis, & Mitson, 2009:6; Porter, 1996:15). In this study, the examination of top management thinking styles is done at a specific organisation within the environment of the retail industry.

Top management play an important role in the development and implementation of strategising practices in the organisation, and as such, it would be illustrative to explore how the thinking styles of top managers relate to their choice of strategising practices. This study made it possible to describe how top managers at the case organisation thought about and selected the strategising practices to realise their competitive strategy.

Porter (1996:64) stated '*... [a] competitive strategy is about being different and deliberately choosing a different set of activities [practices] to deliver a unique mix of values*'. Iranzadeh and Amlashi (2013:340) echo this view by adding: "*... [a] strategy is the process of creating unique and valuable situations for the organisation*".

At the time of the study, the annual turnover of the case organisation was R77.5 billion, and it had 80 000 people in its employ (the retail organisation online, 2017). The case organisation claimed 15% of the formal market share (the SA retail formal industry

was estimated at R550 billion a year – excluding the informal market). The market share, at the time of the study, was at its lowest for the retail organisation (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2012; Businesslive online, 2017). It was, therefore, essential for this organisation to retain, defend and increase its competitiveness.

Previous discursive studies have provided insight into language usage. However, most of these studies have neglected the way strategists think, therefore suggesting that the ‘thinking dimension’ of strategic decision-making might be under-researched (Bonn, 2004:340; Salih & Alnaji, 2014:1873).

### **1.3.1 Previous research**

The previous research listed below did not directly address how strategising practices were related to the thinking styles of top managers.

- Jarzabkowski, Giulietti, Oliveira, and Amoo (2012:3) focus on strategic tools in context while Burke and Wolf (2017) highlight the need for further identification and comparison among the various types of strategic tools (not strategising practices), such as:
  - Institutionalised decision-support systems tools;
  - Interactive tools that assist in communication and organisational design;
  - Performative tools that help enhance and measure functional output; and
  - Tool development in response to pluralistic and ambiguous environments.

‘Strategic tools’ were excluded in this study, and the focus was specifically on ‘strategising practices’ that enable the organisational strategy, holistically, whether it be at the micro-level or at the macro-level of top management praxis.

- Liebl and Schwarz (2010) and later Liu, Vlaev, Fang, Denrell, and Chater (2017:135) point to a gap in the ‘informational cascades’ that are used to analyse normalisation processes in organisations to gain a deeper understanding. Informational cascades occur when the current group of top management, acting rationally, decide to follow the decisions of the previous top management, who were likely led by a different CEO. These top managers disregard their own private information when functioning under the leadership of the various CEOs. While this was linked back to how strategising practices were formed and normalised in an

organisation, the elements of 'top management' and 'thinking styles' were missing from their research. While Liu *et al.*, (2017:135) built on the 'informational cascades' to introduce the concept of 'mindspace', which refers to strategising practices as management's own bias, yet still based on the ideas of the previous CEO. In 'mindspace', the additional view is that the behavioural factors of CEOs are considered relative to how they relate to the context of strategising (Liu *et al.*, 2017:135).

- Research by Vaara (2010:29) and Burgelman, Floyd, Laamanen, Mantere, Vaara and Whittington (2018) highlights a research gap in strategic 'storytelling' (discursive study). They mapped out alternative stories, they referred to story construction, and how stories gain an institutionalised status over time. Through the framework of strategy processes and practices (SAPP), the concepts of language and meaning are espoused as:
  - temporality;
  - actors and agency;
  - cognition (thinking styles) and emotionality;
  - materiality and tools (strategising practices); and
  - structures and systems (Burgelman *et al.*, 2018).

There were elements of thinking styles in the 'construction', 'cognition', and elements of strategising practices in reaching 'institutionalised statuses in their research. However, the embedding of practices in an organisation was beyond the scope of this study.

- In their research, Jarzabkowski and Whittington (2008:282) suggest that a competency gap does exist within the application of thinking styles, and there is a need to determine what makes a competent strategy practitioner and what strategic studies provoke recognition and reflection. This study, which investigated top management as competent strategists, included a review of their perspective on thinking styles. The element of focusing on the practitioner (top management) was relevant to this study. There was an extension to the study, that is, to investigate their choice of strategising practices.
- Schaap (2007) and Thomas (2017) both researched the elements of executive education programmes and management education within the South African context. The common ground between their research studies was the process of

examining the pedagogy around knowledge transmission. This study extended beyond both these studies by focusing on strategy practitioners, their daily activities or praxis, and their selection of strategising practice.

- Lastly, a possible research gap was highlighted in Harypursat's (2006:11) work, specifically investigating what optimum thinking styles are required within top management structures. Goldman (2012:25) took this further and looked at the interplay of how 'leadership styles' and thinking styles relate to each other. Both these researches are cited later in this study.

Given the highlighted gaps in previous research, as well as the possible impact thinking styles of top managers might have on the competitiveness of organisations, an exploratory investigation into the possible rapport between the thinking styles and strategising practises used by top managers is justified. The case organisation is illustrative of a successful organisation in the South African retail industry, thereby justifying the use of the case organisation when investigating the possible rapport between thinking styles and strategising practise.

### **1.3.2 Importance and benefits of the proposed research**

The doing of strategy, or the strategy discourse (practices), is the dependent variable, while thinking styles are the independent variable in this study. Both are referred to as units of observation. Discursive practices, among other practices employed by strategists, are some of the key areas that researchers from the S-as-P perspective are focusing on. Discursive practices include discourse on the use of language and communication methods, or the verbal interchange between parties within a social context (Mitchel, 2017). This study used the language patterns of top managers to investigate how the 'taken-for-granted', namely, the way strategists think, influence the day-to-day, situation-to-situation, strategising practices done by top managers (Balogun *et al.*, 2013:1).

Discursive studies are rare in the field of strategy, and yet are essential to the S-as-P research agenda (Balogun *et al.*, 2013:2; Vaara, 2010:30). It is proposed that this discursive study will add to the existing body of knowledge in the S-as-P field. Furthermore, the study might have management implication. Understanding the key thinking characteristics of the strategic thinker could enable organisations to appoint candidates into top management that are enabled strategic decision-makers (Salih &

Alnaji, 2014:1880; Bonn, 2004:340). At the focal organisation, some of the appointments into top management level were senior but they were not necessarily strategists nor were they practitioners of strategy, as the data analysis will show. Other appointees were known for not taking ownership of the big decisions required of them, instead relied on consensus leadership. The majority of appointees into top management were groomed internally, which accounted for their restraint in interacting with the chief executive, and their roles were limited and disabled in strategy formulation.

## **1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Based on the background on top management thinking styles, there are a number of possibilities arise, such as - the possibility specific thinking styles lead to the endorsement of certain strategising practices. It is possible strategising practices have either a positive or a negative impact on the organisational strategy (Vaara & Durand, 2012; Balogun, *et al.*, 2013; Porter, 1996). If so, thinking styles affect certain strategising practices in a unique manner. It is possible top management have a casual preference for particular thinking styles. Some top managers may have a purposeful selection of strategising practices. If there is a preference, the preferred thinking styles and preferred strategising practices at times legitimise or disable the organisational strategy. It is possible there is significance on what thinking styles and strategising practices are in common use, and there may be a history of this evidence. Different top management possibly apply thinking styles differently, with spatial and time considerations observed. There are environmental realities leading to changes in top management thinking styles and changes in specific strategising practice used. Understanding the environmental realities under change could add to the body of knowledge within S-as-P perspective agenda. Lastly, 'thinking practice' could be added to the *organisational field within S-as-P perspective*.

Therefore, the research problem this study aimed to address highlighted a need to uncover whether strategising practices of top managers were related to their thinking styles.

The emphasised research gaps showed there is limited research focused on the 'thinking dimension' role in the selection process top management make and their



decision-making (Bonn, 2004; Salih & Alnaji, 2014). Further, one of the directions of the S-as-P-perspective research agenda is to move towards the application of SAPP framework (Burgelman *et al.*, 2018) further to understand how practices and processes relate. Therefore combining the gaps and using the research direction, also leads to the same research problem, that is to uncover whether strategising practices of top managers were related to their thinking styles.

Once the research problem is addressed, it is possible that a profile of top management could be designed, based on their thinking styles and preference for strategising practices, which could allow organisations to help recruit into top management candidates with a profile capable to optimise strategising.

The purpose statement of the study is described in the next section.

## **1.5 PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Against this research problem, the purpose of this study was to explore the possible rapport between strategising practices (considered the 'doing' of strategy) and the thinking styles of top managers at a South African retailer. Further, this research has the following purposes to (Hussey & Hussey, 1997):

- examine practice theory in the literature review section and seek updated relevant knowledge on strategy-as-practice and thinking styles,
- conduct a survey on top management at the focal organisation in order to investigate practical application of strategic theory and examine how the changing environment realities impact thinking styles and strategising,
- possibly provide coping strategies to top management when there is internal and external variables disrupting the normal strategising processes, affecting how top management think and how strategising practice are applied,
- explore if the findings could be generalized to the whole top management population

- construct an organisational profile of top management based on their thinking styles and choice of strategising practices,
- explain the new phenomenon of environmental realities impacting on top management thinking styles,
- generate new knowledge within strategy-as-practice perspective on combining different theories into a unified view of top management, and
- generate new knowledge that social sciences can be based on natural sciences to improve validity, and in this multi-disciplinary research with 'strategising practices' from business sciences and 'thinking styles' from social sciences.

With the purpose clearly defined, the research questions and research objectives are presented in the next section.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

In context of the stated purpose statement the following research questions (RQ) were developed.

### **1.6.1 Research questions**

- RQ1:** What thinking styles of top managers at the case organisation are commonly used?
- RQ2:** What strategising practices of top managers at the case organisation are commonly used?
- RQ3:** Is there a rapport between the thinking styles and the strategising practices, as commonly used by top managers at the case organisation?

### **1.6.2 Research objectives**

With the research questions in mind, the following research objectives (RO) were formulated. It is the objective of the research to:

- RO1:** Identify the most common thinking styles of top managers at the case organisation.

- RO2:** Identify which strategising practices top managers at the case organisation commonly employ.
- RO3:** Explore the possible rapport between the thinking styles and strategising practices used by top managers at the case organisation.

## **1.7 DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

The delimitations of this study refer to the choices made about the study that were controllable (Salkind, 2012:259; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009:24).

### **1.7.1 Delimitations**

The study had certain delimitations about the context, the constructs and the theoretical perspectives of the research, namely:

- The study was focused on investigating strategising practices and thinking styles, as variables and as units of observation. Previous research highlighted various other variables linked to thinking and practice elements, which are delimited in this study, for example, storytelling, the use of strategic tools, management education, and the role of middle managers. This study focuses on strategising practices and thinking styles only.
- In addition, this study was delimited to the top management. These managers have responsibilities spanning across regions, divisions, and even nationally, with an average of five middle managers as direct reports. At the case organisation, managers were regarded as top managers when they had either an 'A', 'B' or 'C' grading. The A-grade being the board of directors and group executives, B-grade referring to general managers, and C-grade to managers with regional status.
- The study was delimited to focusing on the offices of the retail organisation in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and Kenilworth in Cape Town.

### **1.7.2 Assumptions**

The following assumptions underpinned the research study. It was assumed that:

- thinking styles was a synonym for cognitive styles and that any literature or methodology that related to the one concept, would also apply to the other;
- respondents would participate, give timely responses and answer honestly;

- the research objectives would be addressed; and
- supporting data would be obtained through a mixed-methods research approach.

## 1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Table 1.1 lists a brief explanation of terms that are central to this research study.

**Table 1.1: Terms central to this research study**

Term	Explanation
<b>Practice-based view (PBV)</b>	PBV is defined as activities that organisations implement. PBV are specific, actual techniques top management might use to develop strategising practices (Bromiley & Rau, 2014:5). These practices are publicly known; they are imitable and amendable to transfer across other organisations (Bromiley & Rau, 2014:5). This study aimed to review strategising practices that may be common in retail.
<b>Praxis</b>	In this study, praxis refers to the meaningful activities of top managers that enable strategy. Praxis is the flow of human activity, such as top management strategising practices. Praxis has four levels: a) micro-level (daily practices based on individual or small teams), b) meso-level (these are short term or quarterly practices normally with an organisational perspective), c) macro-level (these practices span a financial year and are an industry perspective), and d) meta-level these are long-term practices (Jarzabkowski <i>et al.</i> , 2007:5; Vaara, 2010:38).
<b>Resource-based view (RBV)</b>	RBV is defined as activities, such as strategising practices, that an organisation practices with the emphasis on key and specific practices that other organisations cannot imitate (Bromiley & Rau, 2014:5).
<b>Strategising</b>	Strategising is strategy conceptualisation, a top management preoccupation (Carter, Clegg & Kornberger, 2008:89; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2011). Strategising as a verb emphasises the day-to-day issues of managing, from the macro- to micro strategic issues (Carter <i>et al.</i> , 2008:87). Strategising is said to occur where the praxis, the practices, and the practitioners overlap, otherwise known as the nexus (Jarzabkowski <i>et al.</i> , 2007:8). For this study, strategising is the act of top management planning and maintaining a competitive advantage by reviewing how their micro activities enable the macro plans.
<b>Strategising practices</b>	Strategising practices are the social, the symbolic and the material tools through which strategising are done (Löwstedt, 2015:37). These practices are similar to top management artefacts used in strategising and similar to the top management micro/macro-praxis (Löwstedt, 2015:37).
<b>Thinking styles (Sternberg, 1990)</b>	Managements' cognitive styles of thinking, learning, team dynamics and leadership styles are the main reference in this study (Sternberg, 1988; Sternberg & Wagner, 1992; Murphy, 2006:27; Harypursat, 2006). These refer to an individual's preferred process for thinking (Sternberg, 1988, Murphy, 2006:3; Karakas, 2011:198). In this study, thinking styles is the key variable and unit of observation, as it is the

Term	Explanation
	act of planning as done by top managers to achieve the organisational strategy. Thinking styles are problem-solving methods and reasoning processes that help to elucidate why top management respond in different ways to problematic situations within strategising (Sternberg, 1988, Sternberg & Wagner, 1992; Murphy, 2006:3; Karakas, 2011:198).
<b>Top Management</b>	<p>Top management refer to the senior management of an organisation who directly shape the strategy, who are preoccupied with strategising, and who, as strategists or visionaries, ensure business continuity (Goldman, 2012:35; Jarzabkowski, Spee &amp; Smets, 2013:5; Vaara &amp; Whittington, 2012:4).</p> <p>As the most senior levels of an organisation, top management lead middle management teams to realise strategy and are at times the group heads of departments or divisions.</p>

Source: Author's own compilation

In the following section, an introductory literature review is provided to highlight the body of work around the key terms of the study, namely, strategising practices and thinking styles.

## 1.9 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategists, as actors in strategy formulation, think about organisational processes and re-engineering in order to realise a strategy (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007:5). There is the marginalisation of the individual manager's thinking during strategising, as more needs to be done to develop strategy performance outcomes that are linked to the micro/macro phenomena for management, their departments and their organisations, all linked at an institutional level (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009:17). The implication is that practice-based research is required in the field of strategising, much like business schools' case studies (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:2).

Strategising practices are introduced in the following section.

### 1.9.1 Strategising practices

There are various strategising practice themes found in practice literature (given by Gomez and Bouty (2011), Blasco (2012), and Balogun *et al.* (2013) among others). These include socialisation practices, artefacts and visual representation, episodic practices, material practices, praxis, organisational norms, discursive practices, and practices focused on routine, such as administration practices and procedural

practices. Research into strategising practices has referred to the following management activities as strategising practices: meetings, workshops, plans, budgets, procedures, enacted ethics, the application of frameworks, behaviour, codes of conduct, the use of language, story-telling, and business materials, such as the use of tools, digital presentations, work documents, and organisational norms (Balogun *et al.*, 2013:15; Blasco, 2012:368).

Practices are linked to the artefacts, to the management and to the environmental situations in which an organisation finds itself. Therefore, there is complicity between the top management *habitus*<sup>1</sup> and the organisational profile concerning practices (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:922). The actual act of practice could be said to be the enactment of *habitus*, while filtering personal, biased beliefs and emotional dispositions that have developed over time (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:924).

Managers seek higher academic qualifications to improve their ability to think strategically, thereby improving their use of strategising practices (Balogun *et al.*, 2013:3; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2012:2). In addition, Balogun *et al.* (2013:22) assert that as strategists, these managers face the conflicting demands of having to choose between, firstly, being theoretical or being hands-on (thinking vs. acting), secondly, being self-sustaining or being social (solitude vs. sharing), and thirdly, being environmentally-focused or being organisationally-focused (endogenous vs. exogenous). The configuration of these activities enables the organisation to compete effectively.

In the S-as-P perspective and the practice movement, suggestions are made about the day-to-day link between micro- and macro-level praxis, especially with regard to performance reviews, budgeting, expenditure meetings, presentations, workshops, resource allocation, mediation, monitoring, controlling strategy tools, interaction with the organisational culture, values and traditions, and the language used (Carter *et al.*, 2008; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). The link between micro activities and macro praxis does not happen in isolation. In addition to this praxis, top managers are forced to implement the organisational strategies faster owing to the increased pace of

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<sup>1</sup> Habitus is the structure of the personality of an individual and is the human element in the choosing of these practices (Whittington 2006:613; Carter *et al.*, 2008:89).

globalisation and increased market competition (Wedlin, 2010:5; Worren *et al.*, 2002:1228).

The following section introduces the next unit of observation, which is thinking styles.

### 1.9.2 Thinking styles when strategising

Karakas (2011:217) refers to numerous different thinking styles in both psychology and strategy literature. These include holistic thinking, interconnected thinking, mechanical, integrative or creative thinking, and the paradoxical and systematic thinking styles. From this list, it can be deduced that there is more to 'thinking' than just a transitive cognitive process. For example, 'dynamic thinking' entails an association with organisational transformation, which requires management to have 'integrative, non-linear and dynamic thinking' owing to management practices increasing in complexity (Karakas, 2011:202).

On the other hand, Allinson and Hayes (2012:2) reviewed over 70 measurements of thinking styles and learning styles, and argued that there is a multiplicity of options reflected in the total complexity of thinking. The different thinking styles are often referenced in research, both from the positivist and constructivist perspectives. They represent the construct of human consciousness as having a dual nature, as seen in the Jung typology of personality that includes both the brain's left and right hemisphere dominant decision styles (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:2). These evolving viewpoints make up the cognitive styles or the thinking styles as discussed in this study.

Listed below are examples of various thinking styles found in literature. Researchers such as Hayes and Allinson (1994) studied cognitive thinking styles and management practices. Armstrong (1999) conducted a study on individual differences in cognitive styles. Hodgkinson and Sadler-Smith (2003) and Lofstrom (2005) studied intuition and analysis. Backhaus and Liff (2007a) conducted studies on cognitive styles index and education. Brigham and Mitchell (2010) studied owner managers. Allinson and Hayes (2012:2) studied cognition while Hamad (2012) studied the influence of cognitive styles on entrepreneurial behaviour. The following examples of cognitive styles give an indication on the broadness of studies on thinking styles (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:6):

- **The linear/non-linear method:** The method considers how information is processed, that is, how it is ordered in an analytical or unstructured manner. Some

authors state that this method has a limited range, providing only two options, and that it lacks the option to incorporate diversity (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:6).

- **The balanced view style** is more diplomatic than the linear/non-linear method. The balanced view style possibly indicates indecisiveness and incorporates many diverse influences (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:6). In the fast-paced world of retail, this style may not be appropriate. However, it could work in wage negotiations with unions or price negotiations with suppliers.
- **The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI):** The indicator originated from the Carl Jung's typology research which proposed a combination of psychological functions by means of which humans experience the world: extraversion, sensing, thinking and judging, coupled with introversion, intuition, feeling and perceiving (Allinson & Hayes, 2012; Kim & Han, 2014:3). This indicator is more of a personality type profiler. There are cognitive aspects that can be applied to both this study and to the work of Allinson and Hayes (2012:14) on their Cognitive Style Index (CSI) where *"...CSI scores would correlate positively with the introversion and thinking poles, and negatively with the intuitive and perception poles of the four MBTI scales."* The overall result of this link between MBTI and CSI is that the analytical thinker's approach to strategy problem-solving differs from the intuitive thinker's approach. This may lead to different choices being made about what and how strategising practices should be applied. MBTI focuses mainly on personality profiling and it was only used as support data.
- **The Vance, Groves, Paik and Kindler (2007) thinking styles** integrate the linear/non-linear profiles. Their focus is on how information is sourced from external or internal sources (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:17). While it is important to understand where information comes from, this study was not concerned with what informed individuals or their upbringing, rather it focused on how their thinking styles guided their current strategising choices.
- **Jung's thinking styles** consists of combinations of "...sensing/thinking, sensing/feeling, intuiting/thinking and intuiting/feeling..." as combinations of emotional states and thinking processing. The Jung thinking styles lack currency and use the old concepts of regarding intuition as a 'feminine influence', versus regarding thinking as 'masculine', which militates against today's efforts to eliminate gender bias (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:17).



- **In Murphy's (2006:68) study**, she applied the Sternberg and Wagner (1992) TSI that Cilliers and Sternberg (2001) had applied in their study. The TSI is used to look at the styles of thinking that management displays when thinking (Sternberg, 1988). The TSI has the following dimensions: the function dimension, the form dimension, the level dimension, scope and the leaning dimension (Sternberg, 1988; Sternberg & Wagener, 1992):
  - The function dimension includes the legislative, executive and judicial thinking styles.
  - In turn, the form dimension includes the hierarchical, oligarchic, monarchic, and anarchic styles.
  - The level dimension includes the global and local styles.
  - The scope dimension includes the internal and external styles.
  - The leaning includes the liberal and conservative styles.

Adaptations were made to Sternberg's (1988) original work, such as, describing the "liberal style" as the "progressive style". In addition, there is no mention of "dimensions" in Sternberg's (1988) study, only "aspects" of government. Further, Sternberg (1997) split the thinking styles into five "parts", not aspects or dimensions as done in later studies. Sternberg (1988) also referred to the list as "intellectual styles" and not "thinking styles" as adapted by Sternberg and Wagner (1992) in their study. In Sternberg's (1997) study, there were ten item questions under each subscale, except for under Global and Local, which both had eight item questions each. This means the original TSI had 126 questions versus the 104 items that Sternberg and Wagner (1992), and later Murphy (2006), applied in their studies.

Against this background, Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) TSI was used in this study in order to explore the research questions. The research questions could therefore be asked knowing that there is an alignment between the research objectives, research questions and the instrument used to collect the data.

The following section explains in detail how the TSI was used in this research study.

### **1.9.3 Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI)**

Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) TSI was based on the theory of mental self-government that Sternberg (1988; 1990:367) developed to understand the intelligence

styles that affect performance. The theory was based on Sternberg's (1988) early work on the notion that people need to govern or manage their everyday activities. Sternberg (1990:367) demonstrated that "just as governments carry out legislative, executive and judicial functions, so does the mind".

Cilliers and Sternberg (2001), and later Murphy (2006:126), applied the Sternberg and Wagner (1992) TSI in their studies. The list of thinking styles is summarised in Table 1.2. There were three key reasons why this list was deemed the best fit for this study. Firstly, Murphy (2006:126) had previously been applied within a South African context. Secondly, Sternberg's (1988) theory of mental self-government explains how individuals use their intelligence to adapt to their environment. In this study, the same premise applies, with extensions on how environmental factors (situations) affect the thinking styles; and finally, the list used the analogy of the various dimensions of government. In this study, these dimensions are a common factor in the highly politically aware South African industry to allow for relative comparisons.

However, this study makes the following contributions to the list:

- The selection of Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) thinking styles was based on the prominent thinking styles identified by Sternberg (1988) in his work on mental self-government. This study takes this further by updating the literature review on thinking styles and applying it to top management.
- The original TSI had 126 items under the 13 subscales, and the latest iteration of the TSI has 104 items under the 13 subscales (Sternberg, 1988; 1990; Sternberg & Wagner, 1992; Cilliers & Sternberg, 2001; Murphy, 2006:126).

As seen in Table 1.2, the 13 thinking styles were grouped into five different dimensions: the function dimension, the form dimension, the level dimension, the scope, and the leaning dimension.

**Table 1.2: A short version of the TSI**

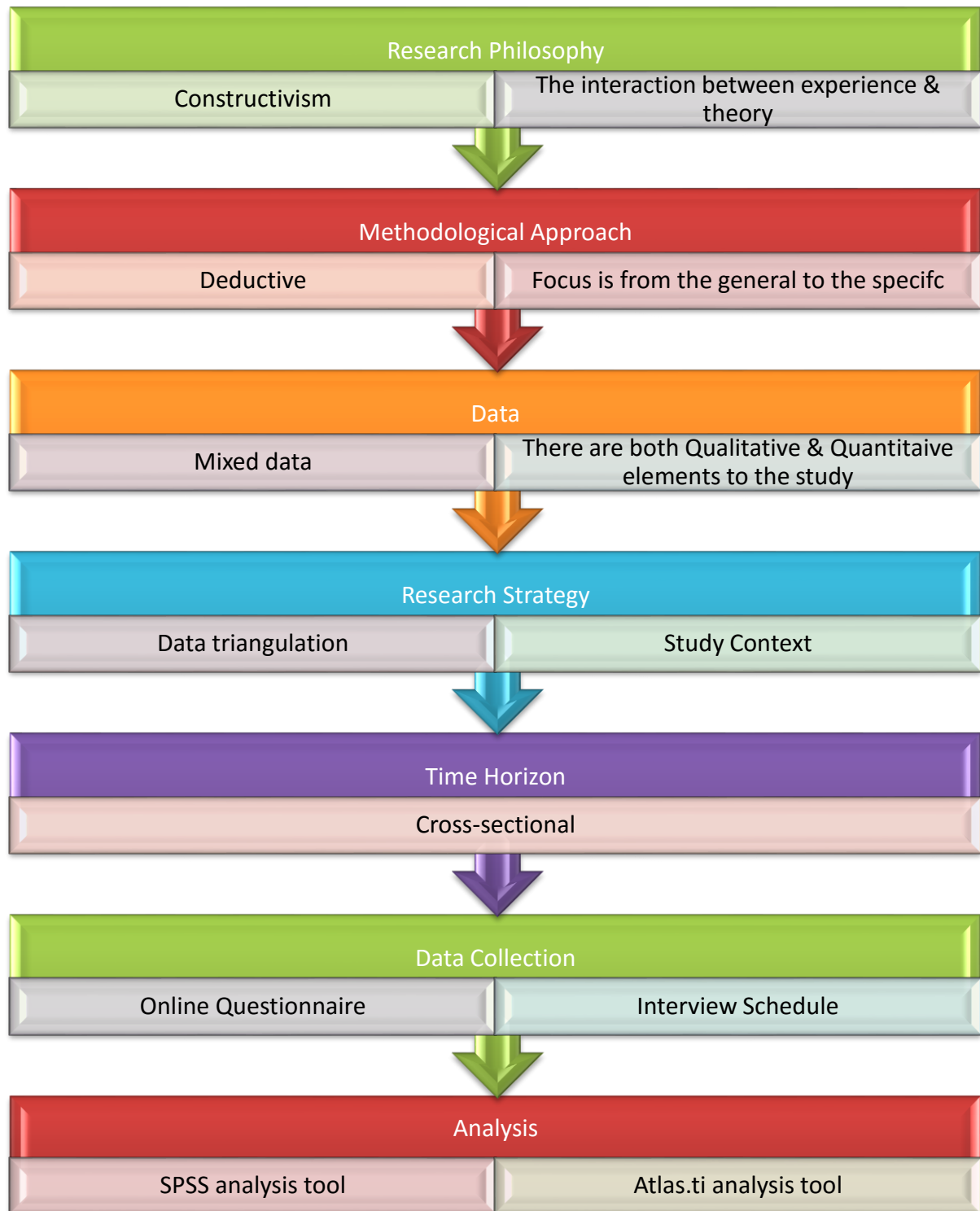
<b>DIMENSION: FUNCTIONS</b>	
Legislative style	The [manager] prefers tasks requiring creative strategies.
Executive style	The [manager] is more concerned with the implementation of tasks that have set guidelines.
Judicial style	The [manager] focuses attention on evaluating the products of other's activities.
<b>DIMENSION: FORMS</b>	
Monarchic style	The [manager] prefers tasks that allow complete focus on one thing at a time.
Hierarchical style	The [manager] prefers to distribute attention across several tasks that are prioritised.
Oligarchic style	The [manager] prefers to work toward multiple objectives during the same period, without setting clear priorities.
Anarchic style	The [manager] prefers working on tasks that require no system at all.
<b>DIMENSION: LEVELS</b>	
Local style	The [manager] prefers tasks requiring working with details.
Global style	The [manager] pays more attention to the overall picture regarding an issue and to abstract ideas.
<b>DIMENSION: SCOPE</b>	
Internal style	The [manager] prefers being engaged in tasks that allow working independently.
External style	The [manager] prefers being engaged in tasks that provide opportunities for developing interpersonal relationships.
<b>DIMENSION: LEANINGS</b>	
Liberal style	The [manager] prefers novelty and ambiguity.
Conservative style	The [manager] adheres to existing rules and procedures in performing tasks.

Source: Sternberg (1988), adapted by Sternberg and Wagner (1992), adapted by Murphy (2006:30) and adapted in this study to reflect "manager".

The TSI is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. The following section provides an overview of the research design applied in the study.

## 1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN

Figure 1.2 is a diagram detailing of the research logic associated with the research design.



**Figure 1.2: Research logic applied in this study**

### **1.10.1 Research philosophy**

The over-arching term of 'philosophy' relates to 'the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge' as applied in research (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:177). Research design of a study consists of three interrelated parts that logically link the collected data. The interrelated parts are research paradigm, inquiry strategy and the research methods (Creswell, 2008:72; Salkind, 2012:10).

The study was conducted from a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism was based on how top managers experience, learn, understand, reflect, implement, and think about strategising practices. The study's empirical focus was on the interactions of the strategising practices of top managers (micro praxis) and their thinking styles. General theory related to thinking styles was examined in order to measure the real life effect on the strategising practises of top managers. This is in line with the underlying assumptions associated with a deductive inquiry strategy. A deductive inquiry strategy develops research questions based on existing theory and it is dealt from the general-to-the-specific. That is, from the general practice theory derived from the literature review to the specific strategising practices applied at the retail organisation (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:520; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011:305).

### **1.10.2 Methodological approach**

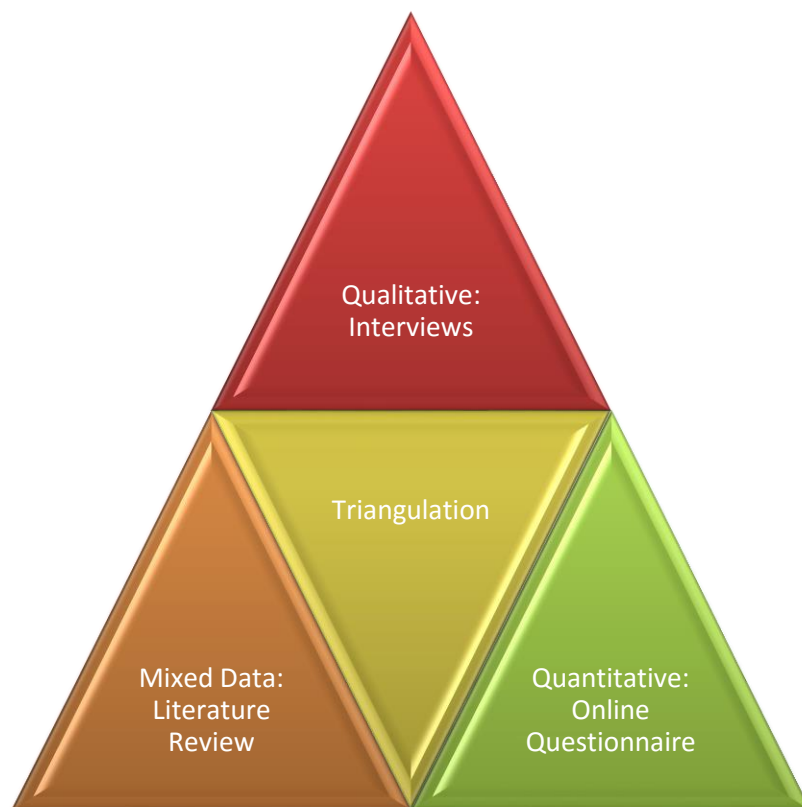
A mixed-methods approach was applied in this study, and both quantitative as well as qualitative elements were incorporated. The quantitative elements included were predetermined, namely, the online questionnaire and instrument-based questions that rely on performance data and statistical analysis data. The qualitative elements in the study were used to examine human behaviour. The study was an example of descriptive research (an explanatory study), which required that the following proposition be explored, namely, there are differences in the ways that various thinking styles affect the choice of strategising practices. Descriptive research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011; Saunders *et al.*, 2009:171) would portray an accurate profile of top management when they are thinking about strategising practices.

The mixed-methods approach applied (Creswell, 2003:13; Creswell 2009:203) was split into two non-sequential stages: the quantitative stage and the qualitative stage. During the quantitative stage, numerical data was collected using a questionnaire.

During the qualitative stage, data were collected from interviews. The mixed methods also included qualitative elements that involved attitudinal data and data derived from interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing new issues to emerge for exploration (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:148; Salkind, 2012:10), which in this study, showed how the TSI expanded and contracted when applied under different situations. The mixed-methods approach combined the quantitative and qualitative approaches, which aligned with the mixed data collected because of the use of multiple sources of evidence.

### 1.10.3 Sources of data

Qualitative data can be derived from a variety of sources (Rowley, 2002; Shakir, 2002:195; Yin, 2009). In this study, it was obtained from interviews. The quantitative elements were collected using the questionnaire. Figure 1.3 below is a diagrammatical representation of the methodology utilised in the study.



**Figure 1.3: Non-sequential phases of the mixed data sources**

The first triangle on top indicates the qualitative data that were collected through interviews. Conversely, the bottom left triangle shows quantitative data was collected from the questionnaire. The triangle on the right shows the mixed data. In the centre, data were aligned in order to triangulate the multiple sources of data (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:176) and to verify the results.

In the following section, the research design associated with answering the research questions is tabled.

#### **1.10.4 Research design associated with Research Question 1**

In this section, Table 1.3 presents a summary of the research design that was used to address Research Question 1 (RQ1). Table 1.4, following that, addresses Research Question 2 (RQ2) and, based on the outcome of these tables, Research Question 3 is summarised thereafter. Table 1.3 provides clarification on the Research Question 1 in relation to the objectives, purpose, unit of analysis, data collection, methodology, data type, logic, and validity.



**Table 1.3: Research methods associated with Research Question 1**

<b>RQ1: What thinking styles of top managers at the case organisation are commonly used?</b>	
<b>Research objective</b>	RO 1: To identify the most common thinking styles of top managers at the case organisation
<b>Research purpose</b>	To examine how the thinking styles of top management at the retail organisation relate to their choice of strategising practices.
<b>Unit of analysis</b>	Top Management
<b>Unit of observation</b>	Thinking styles - using the TSI instrument
<b>Broad-level data collection unit</b>	Top management thinking
<b>Research methodology</b>	Mixed data was collected. A qualitative and quantitative research methodology was applied. Some of the data was collected via the Sternberg and Wagner (1992) TSI instrument adapted from Murphy (2006). The instrument was administered as an online questionnaire to generate numerical data.
<b>Data type</b>	Numeric – Online Questionnaire (quantitative) TSI using the Lime Survey adapted for the institution's use.
<b>Narrow-level data collection unit</b>	Target population of 133 top managers at the retail organisation. Sample size is 79 for the questionnaire. However, only a minimum of 52 quality responses are required.
<b>Logical linking of data to the objective</b>	An understanding of what constitutes thinking styles in strategising theory was derived from the literature review. These thinking styles also informed how top management engaged in choice making of strategising practices.
<b>Reliability</b>	<p>The reliability of a scale indicates how free it is from random error (Pallant, 2011:6). Errors may occur in the questionnaire measurements, however, the validity and the reliability reflected an actual degree of error (Eriksson &amp; Kovalainen, 2011:291). Reliability refers to the extent to which the data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings (Saunders <i>et al.</i>, 2009:156).</p> <p>Reliability can be assessed by posing the following three questions (Saunders <i>et al.</i>, 2009:156):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?</li> <li>• Will other observers reach similar observations?</li> <li>• Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?</li> </ul> <p>For this study, these three questions are addressed in detail in the methodology chapter by continuously highlighting the transitive steps</p>

	<p>taken at each point of the research. The data collection process around thinking styles could be repeated by other researchers and yield similar results (Rowley, 2002:20; Eriksson &amp; Kovalainen, 2011:291). For this study, reliability demonstrated that the research principles of a study were academically acceptable.</p> <p>Further, the components of reliability are made up of the true scores and the error scores (Leedy &amp; Ormrod, 2010; Eriksson &amp; Kovalainen, 2011:291). For this study, the components of reliability are the observed scores from the TSI.</p> <p>There were three threats to reliability (Saunders <i>et al.</i>, 2009:156):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respondent error in terms of their willingness and mood to fill in the questionnaire (addressed by arranging a neutral time);</li> <li>• respondent bias by giving favourable answers (addressed by ensuring anonymity, and as an employee the researcher could rely on the respondents to feel safe to give honest feedback); and</li> <li>• observer error (if there were other researchers observing the same event, verification of the data could be done but in this case data triangulation was done to minimise observer error).</li> </ul>
<b>Validity</b>	<p>In this study, validity refers to the extent to which the TSI tool accomplished the intended purpose to identify the thinking styles of top management. To ensure methodological rigour (Salkind, 2012:115), the SPSS measurement and the quantitative nature of the data was aligned in substance, both were numeric.</p>
<b>Content validity</b>	<p>Content validity refers to the extent to which the TSI questionnaire provides adequate coverage of the research questions (Saunders <i>et al.</i>, 2009:373).</p> <p>Judgement of what is 'adequate coverage' can be made in two ways (Saunders <i>et al.</i>, 2009:156):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by careful definition of the research through the literature reviewed; and</li> <li>• using a panel of individuals to assess whether each measurement question in the questionnaire is 'essential', 'useful but not essential', or 'not necessary'.</li> </ul> <p>The questions for the research were derived from the literature reviewed on the TSI, specifically Sternberg (1988), Allinson and Hayes (2012) and Murphy's (2006:72) questionnaire needed to reflect a fair representation of the universe of management thinking styles. Content validity refers to the extent to which the TSI questionnaire instrument reflected a representative sample of the thinking styles universe (Leedy &amp; Ormrod, 2010).</p> <p>According to Barry, Chaney, Stelfox, and Chaney (2011:99) and (Saunders <i>et al.</i>, 2009:373), validity is made up of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content validity;</li> <li>• criterion-related validity (or predictive validity which subsumes that there is concurrency); and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>construct validity (or measurements of the presence of constructs)</li> </ul>
<b>S-as-P perspective</b>	<b>Domain D</b> applies in this study as it is about top managements as aggregate practitioners, and their strategising practices as seen from the macro-praxis.

Source: Author's own compilation

### 1.10.5 Research design associated with Research Question 2

Table 1.4 provides a summary of the research design that was used to address Research Question 2 (RQ2). Each question is clarified along with the objectives, purpose, unit of analysis, data collection, methodology, data type, logic, and validity. The last row in the table addresses the S-as-P perspective.

**Table 1.4: Research methods associated with research question 2**

<b>RQ2: What strategising practices of top managers at the case organisation are commonly used?</b>	
<b>Research objective</b>	RO 2: Identify which strategising practices top managers at the case organisation commonly employ
<b>Research purpose</b>	To examine the choice of and use of strategising practices
<b>Unit of analysis</b>	Top management
<b>Unit of observation</b>	Strategising practices
<b>Broad-level data collection unit</b>	Literature review on the theory of strategising practices and strategic management within the retail industry context
<b>Research methodology</b>	This study contained mixed data. Qualitative data was generated from both the online questionnaire loaded on the Lime survey website (adapted for institutional use) and the interview's demographic section, specifically question 9 to address this research question.
<b>Data type</b>	Mixed data was used in this study. The main data was textual in the interview phase where a qualitative method was used. The population was made up of a sample (n=33) of top managers who were interviewed.
<b>Narrow-level data collection unit</b>	A list of strategising practices at the retail organisation was compared to the literature review on strategising practices.
<b>Logic linking data to objective</b>	Top management used practices without an understanding of the logic of their choice. There was also a misalignment between the practice theory in the literature review and the choice of some practices.

<b>Authenticity and accuracy (Trustworthiness)</b>	<p>For the qualitative phase: authenticity was related to the external criticism applied to the interview data to check whether it was genuine and trustworthy.</p> <p>Accuracy (trustworthiness) is related to internal criticism to check if the interview data presented a true reflection (Salkind, 2012:109). This study provides a reflection of what was occurring within the retail organisation.</p>
<b>Internal validity</b>	<p>Internal validity is the ability of the TSI questionnaire to measure thinking styles (Saunders <i>et al.</i>, 2009:593). The study focused on determining whether the findings of the TSI questionnaire would actually represent the reality of thinking styles.</p> <p>Findings can be attributed to interventions rather than any flaws in the research design.</p> <p>The internal validity of a study is the extent to which the interview data yielded valid information (Salkind, 2012:124). The design allowed accurate conclusions to be drawn about the thinking styles and strategising practices. There were multiple pieces of evidence from multiple sources (Rowley, 2002:20) to allow for data triangulation. Some sources for the study were within the retail organisation and they were used to uncover the convergent lines of inquiry through the application of mixed methods.</p>
<b>External validity</b>	<p>The external validity refers to the extent to which the results apply to the broader retail industry. The study outcome cannot be generalised to the whole retail sector.</p>
<b>Construct validity</b>	<p>A correlation between the test results of the research was compared to previous research by Murphy (2006:63). This form of analysis enabled the reduction of subjectivity, as the researcher was an employee of the retail organisation and objectivity was required (Salkind 2012:126; Rowley, 2002:20). In this study, the strategising practices were compared to past research to ensure that they were consistent with the theory of the test itself.</p>
<b>S-as-P perspective</b>	<p><b>Domain D</b> applies in this study as it is about top managers as aggregate practitioners, and their strategising practices as seen from the macro-praxis.</p>

Source: Author's own compilation

### 1.10.6 Research design associated with Research Question 3

The preceding section dealt with RQ1 and RQ2. The following section examines Research Question 3 (RQ3): Is there a rapport between the thinking styles and the strategising practices, as commonly used by top managers at the case organisation? The questions entailed the statistical analysis of the outcomes of RQ1 and RQ2 above. The Research Objecting (RO3) being to explore the possible rapport between the

thinking styles and strategising practices used, by top managers, at the case organisation. Once the data were analysed, there were three possibilities to answer RQ3:

- That there was a 'relationship' of the study units of observation as per RQ3. However, correlation can be established for numerical data that does not include textual data. Furthermore, correlational analysis does not indicate a 'causal relationship' between the units of observation, only that the inference to causality is deduced from the theory that is supported by statistical analysis (Pallant, 2011).
- That there were underlying strengths, and some rapport, within the basic 'relationship' between the units of observation.
- That the data analysis could merely show a specific 'profile' of the organisation and its top management without any correlation or strong relationships between units of observation being established.

The purpose of RQ3 was to establish whether and how the strategising practices and thinking styles of the participants had any relation or rapport to each other. The survey questions were based on Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) work on the TSI. The raw data was calculated using a 7-point Likert scale developed specifically for the TSI instrument (while noting that a typical Likert scale has five-points to it). The quantitative data was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 24) for further analysis. The data had to be verified to confirm the direction of the *p*-values of the replication of the TSI instrument that Murphy (2006:62) had used in her research. This was done to measure whether the results indicated the same direction. Dr Angela Murphy, University of Southern Queensland, Australia, granted permission for the referencing of her research in the study (see Appendix B: Permission for the replication).

The above methods adequately addressed all three research questions. The following section presents a review of the data collection instruments.

## **1.11 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

The respondents (top managers at the retail organisation) received an email letter requesting their participation in the study (Appendix C). The Sternberg and Wagner

(1992) TSI questionnaire (Appendix D) was attached to the request email. Questionnaires were appropriate for use in this study as they permitted the examination of the relationship between the units of observation (Salkind, 2012:147), from two different academic faculties, in psychology, there are thinking styles and in sociology there are strategising practices. In addition, the questionnaires were designed to explore the constructs of top managers' cognitive preferences and common usage of various thinking styles.

### **1.11.1 The questionnaire**

The TSI was the primary instrument used in the study to examine the thinking styles of top management at the case organisation. The Sternberg and Wagner (1992) instrument was applied on a different unit of investigation, that is, university and college students. Moreover, the original instrument was developed for use with an experimental research design and the associated random sampling methods. However, the study reported herein is considered a discursive study utilising a pragmatic constructivism design and employing a convenience sampling to interview top managers at the retail case organisation (Appendix D).

### **1.11.2 The interview schedule**

The interview schedule was based on the literature review on strategising practices found in practice theory. There were a number of theoretical constructs. These constructs were applied in the development of the questions in the interview schedule. There were seven practice theories which informed the study; these practice theories were dominant and often quoted and cited by various researchers (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:921; Jarzabkowski & Balogun, 2009:1256; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013:4; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011:953; Vaara, Sorsa & Pälli, 2010:689), namely:

- Activity theory
- Foucauldian theory
- Structuration theory
- Bourdieusian theory
- Sense-making theory
- Complexity theory
- critical discourse analysis (CDA).

The interview schedule was made up of 11 questions. The technical questions were asked to create a demographic profile of the participants (Section B). The interview questions were simplified (no complicated academic terms were used) and limited to suit the time constraints of top managers at the retail organisation (Refer to Appendix G).

## **1.12 UNIT OF ANALYSIS**

The 'unit of analysis' is top management. The case organisation is an illustrative example. It is a successful retailer operating in the South African retail industry. In Chapter 3, the case retail organisation and the context in which it operates is detailed. The units of investigation are the top managers at the organisation. The units of observation (variables) are both the strategising practices and the thinking styles as applied by top managers.

At the time this study was undertaken, the retail organisation employed 80 000 people, with over 1 250 branches and more than 5 000 managers. The targeted population group was the top managers consisting of 133 managers, made up of directors, executives, general managers, divisional directors, and regional managers. These top managers formulate the strategies for the organisation.

The response rate of 59% for the questionnaire and 25% for interviews was within the acceptable range, as a response rate of between 25% and 70% is the norm (Gideon 2012:40; Salkind, 2012:105). In this study, it implied that the minimum range was reached and the collected data was adequate to answer the research questions. Furthermore, various statistical inferences could be made with a 25% response rate.

The organisational importance of the study (Salkind, 2012:106; Gideon, 2012:42) was conveyed to the respondents and it was emphasised that the study results could have an organisational impact in relation to the topic, which would be a positive inference (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:180). Top management were therefore encouraged and reminded to respond in time.

The following section briefly discusses the sampling strategies used in the study, as well as an overview of the administration of the instruments.

### **1.12.1 Sampling strategies**

Convenience sampling was used, as this is appropriate when there is a captive audience, which was the situation at the retail organisation. Convenience is, at times, referred to as a non-probability sampling strategy where individuals do not have an independent chance, nor an equal one of being selected (Salkind, 2012:103). It sometimes involves selecting the respondents that are easiest to obtain for the sample (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:272; Salkind, 2012:95). In this study, it was an efficient manner to collect data.

Purposive sampling also applied, as it relied on the judgment of the researcher to select the top managers to be studied. The chances of getting a representative sample were reduced if the researcher excluded certain individuals, and the researcher risked compromising generalisability across the retail organisation and the broader South African retail population. The focus of purposive sampling is on the characteristics of the target population.

### **1.12.2 Administration of the data collection**

Triangulation of the different data collection techniques offered opportunities to seek similar patterns, categorise data and classify responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:177; Salkind, 2012:213). For the mixed-methods approach, researcher captured and transcribed the quantitative data instead of using a transcriber. The checking and rechecking were done using data triangulation between quantitative data from the questionnaire, the qualitative data from the interviews and the literature review data, based on other case studies.

A pilot study was conducted with a retired director from the retail organisation in order to establish the time required to complete the questionnaire and answer the interview questions. The necessary changes, based on their feedback, were made to both instruments.

The raw data from respondents who completed the questionnaires was entered into the IBM SPSS system (version 24) for analysis. The raw data from the interview participants, as well as the literature review, were entered into the Atlas.ti system (Version 7.5.15) for analysis, categorisation and report generation. The researcher ensured that the interview protocol and operational measures were applied



strenuously and were used to address the mentioned research problem and to answer the tabled research questions directly.

The next section covers the ethical implications, the application of confidentiality and details of the informed consent letter given to the respondents and the participants.

### **1.13 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Permission was sought from the Department of Business Management Ethics Committee to conduct the research. In order to ensure that high ethical standards were maintained, the questionnaire responses were imported anonymously into the data-coding platform. The approach focused on the relationship between the study's units of observation. The researcher obtained each top manager's individual consent to gather personal data about him or her. The case organisation placed a caveat of anonymity of the approval of the research, as such, any identifying information was excluded from this dissertation.

#### **1.13.1 Confidentiality**

Only the researcher, the supervisors and the statisticians had access to the data collected. No details of the respondents nor the participants were disclosed, nor were they identifiable. Numerical values were assigned to each respondent and initials were scrambled (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Salkind, 2012:88), the data will be stored for a five-year period, in the locked and security-monitored office of the researcher at the head office of the case organisation.

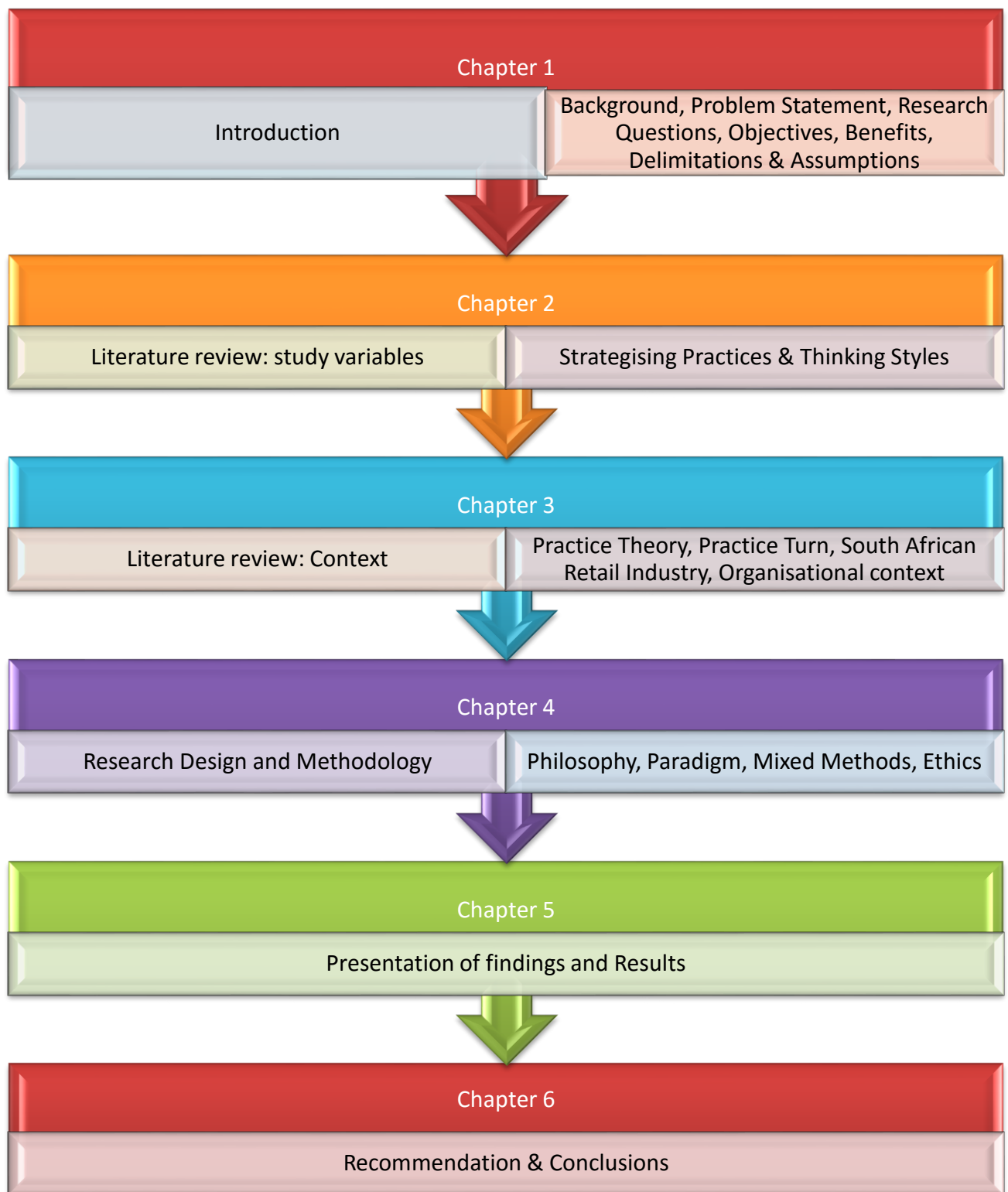
#### **1.13.2 Informed consent letter**

The respondents and participants were given disclosure documents in accordance with the Unisa Ethics Policy. The disclosure documents also related to the confidentiality of their details. The documents quoted the ethics guidelines pertaining to this study. Permission to utilise the respondents and participants' feedback (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:204; Salkind, 2012:86) and the option to withdraw from the study were covered in the documents. The respondents and participants were duly informed of their rights. A copy of the informed consent letter is attached as Appendix C.



## 1.14 CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Figure 1.4 is a graphical representation of the chapter breakdown of the study.



**Figure 1.4: Chapter breakdown of the entire study**

## **1.15 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 introduced the study, which entailed the background and rationale of the subject. The research problem was clearly defined, which led to the purpose statement being put forward. Furthermore, the research questions and research objectives were outlined. The importance and benefits of the study were stated, followed by a brief literature review. The research methodology and data collection were clearly explained. The data collection instruments were introduced, the population was described and ethical standards were highlighted.

In the following chapter, a detailed literature review of the study units of observation, namely, strategising practices and top management thinking styles, is presented.

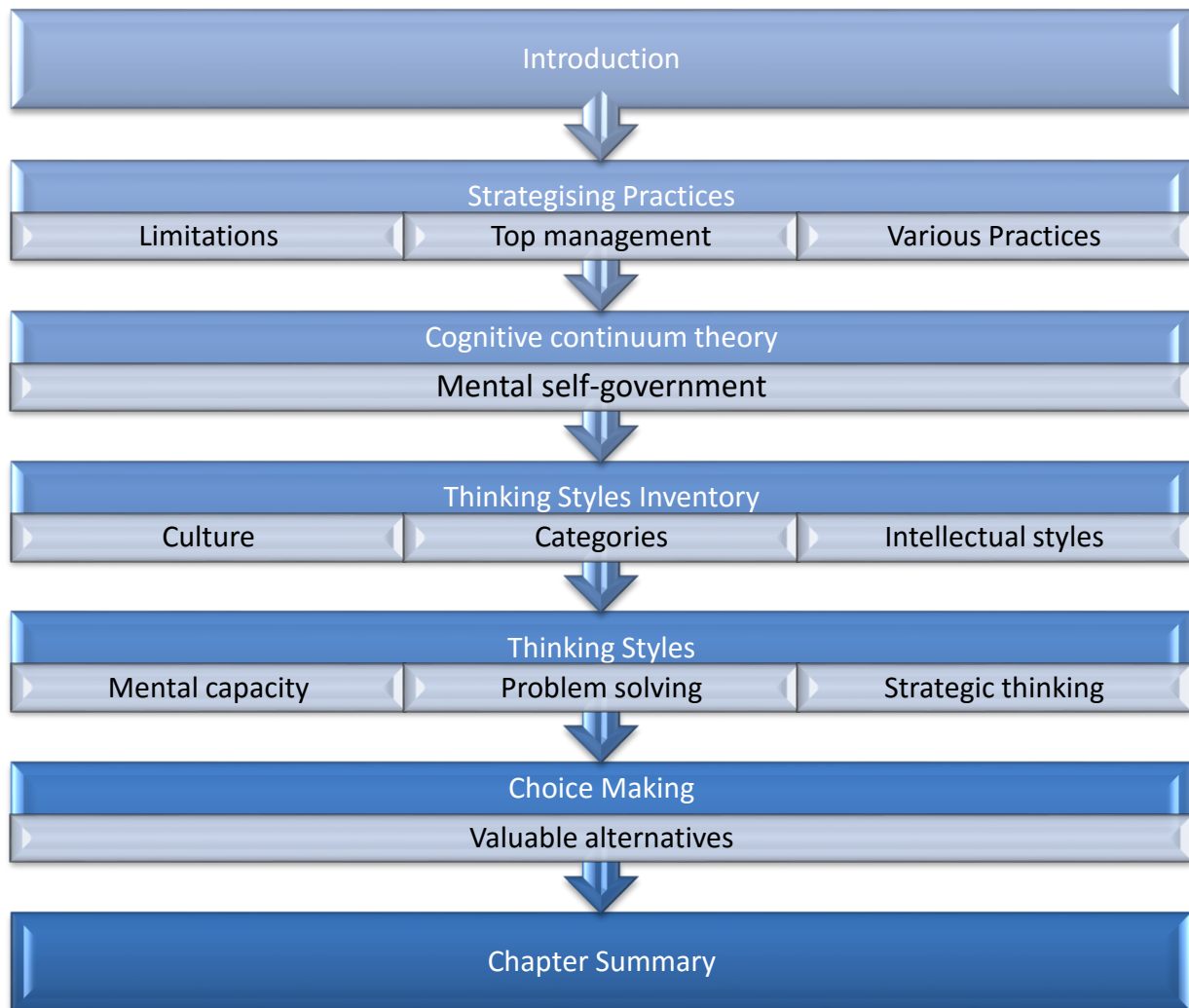
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## CHAPTER 2: STRATEGISING PRACTICES AND THINKING STYLES

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Chapter 1 provided an introduction and background to the current study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature pertaining to the study. Some of the current, relevant and available literature on strategising practices and thinking styles are set out in detail in this chapter.

Figure 2.1 presents a guideline on the flow of topics covered in this chapter, starting with the research units of observation and ending with the background information on the research instrument.



**Figure 2.1: Structure – Chapter 2**

*“Strategising is a... profession like law, medicine or journalism ... it is an occupational [activity] ... with a collective identity and a set of connections that goes far beyond particular organisations ... Collectively, the field employs, develops, licenses, and spreads particular [strategising] practices and particular kinds of practitioners, with aggregate effects that can resonate through whole societies.”* (Whittington, 2007:1580).

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The quotation above indicates that strategising has evolved from being merely a planning activity to become a complete skill set for strategists that includes the application of strategising practices at a professional level. The ability to apply strategising practices is one of the many requirements that someone at top management level has to meet (Seidl & Whittington, 2014:4).

Strategising practices are available to all types of management across various industries. It is the actual use of these practices, their application and the thinking behind the choice of some the practices that determine their success. It takes a specific kind of top manager, who has the ability to generate the impetus behind the use of certain practices, which will galvanise the organisation towards the achievement of the strategy.

Understanding the various theories about the relationship between strategising practices and thinking styles could improve the application of these strategising practices (Goldman, Scott & Follman, 2015:157). For this study, it could improve how top management think about choosing the right practices.

## **2.2 STRATEGISING PRACTICES**

In strategy literature, strategising practices are described as those activities that enable strategies to be applied at a deeper and more meaningful level (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:922). Various strategising practices are found in the literature that focused on management behaviour when formulating strategy (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:922; Vaara & Whittington, 2012:4; Blasco, 2012:368; Balogun et al., 2013:15; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013:5; Vieira, Correia & Lavarda, 2013:582; Giroto, 2013:23).

They include the following:

- praxis
- artefacts
- material practices
- episodic practices
- discursive practices
- procedural practices
- organisational norms
- socialisation practices
- visual representation
- practices focused on routine such as administration practices.

In this study, it is proposed that strategising practices are made up of the day-to-day meaningful activities that top management engage in. The following literature review will look at each aspect and provide evidence of the accumulation of these activities as strategising practices.

Table 2.1 is a representation of the broad themes of strategising practices proposed in this study. The activities listed alongside each strategising practices are interpreted as daily meaningful activities that top management engage in as they go about strategising. Details of the strategising practices and activities are covered in Section 2.2.1.

**Table 2.1: Strategising practices**

STRATEGISING PRACTICES	ACTIVITIES
<b>Episodic practices</b>	a) Strategy meetings, quarterly reviews, b) Workshops, bi-annual reviews, c) Reviews, monthly standstills, d) Administrative practices, management reports, e) Filing, historic, financial year end books, and f) Emails, corporate communications
<b>Material practices</b>	a) Strategic tools, b) Computers, cell phones, pagers, alarms, c) Desks, furniture, physical objects, utensils, stationery, d) Whiteboards, flipcharts, artefacts, e) Post-its, sms, WhatsApp, updates notices, f) Spreadsheets, systems, g) Telephones, communication tools) Digital representations, Work documents
<b>Artefacts</b>	a) Photos, visual representation of vision, b) PowerPoint presentations, overhead projectors, c) Planning documents, flipcharts, d) Textual documents, official papers, e) Maps, location, and f) Posters, visual images
<b>Praxis</b>	a) Work flow, organogram, structure, b) Meetings, updates, performance reviews, c) Number crunching, budgeting, d) Analysing, reviewing, form filling, and e) systems method and procedures
<b>Organisational norms</b>	a) Behaviour, b) Talking, and c) conversations
<b>Context-specific socialisation practices</b>	a) Meetings, weekly management meetings, b) Workshops, crisis management, c) Plans, short term goals, targets, tactics, d) Budgets, weekly, e) Procedures, day to day, f) Enacted ethics, practiced values, g) Frameworks, thematic use of tools, h) Scripted behaviour, accepted norms, i) Code of conduct, disciplined work, consequences, j) Language use, lingo, jargon specific to organisation, and k) Storytelling, legends, past glories, nostalgia
<b>Discursive practices</b>	a) Understanding the deep meaning of the strategy, b) Debating, managing and modifying the strategy, c) Agreeing to the strategy, d) Simplifying the strategy, e) Selling the strategy to all stake holders, and f) Communicating the strategy internally and externally

Source: Adapted from Jarzabkowski *et al.*, (2013); Floris (2014) and Garreau *et al.*, (2015)

Strategising practices have been described as the flow of strategising work within an organisation (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013:5). Flow of work includes the act of holding meetings, the number crunching when budgeting, the daily performance report analysis, the administration processes, and the management conversations held about the strategy (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013:5). There is an interplay of how



strategising practices in an organisation impact on the thinking styles while thinking styles impact on the choices and the choices impact on the strategising practices. Figure 2.2 illustrates how top management's strategising practices and their thinking styles interplay within an organisation. The literature review endeavoured to unpack which of the thinking styles of top management might lead to the choice of a particular strategising practice.



**Figure 2.2: Thinking styles and strategising practices impact strategic choices**

Source: Author's own compilation

It is proposed in this research that groups of activities, reclassified under the manner in which top management use them, can be accumulated to become strategising practices. For example, socialisation practices at the organisation, along with artefacts and a visual representation of the strategy, could provide a structural context from which choices can be made.

Figure 2.3 shows the process of how top management's choice making guides the strategising activity by choosing specific practices, artefacts, socialisation practices, and structural contexts. The figure represents the socialisation practices, artefacts, visual representations, and strategising practices that make up the structural context for top management's choice making.

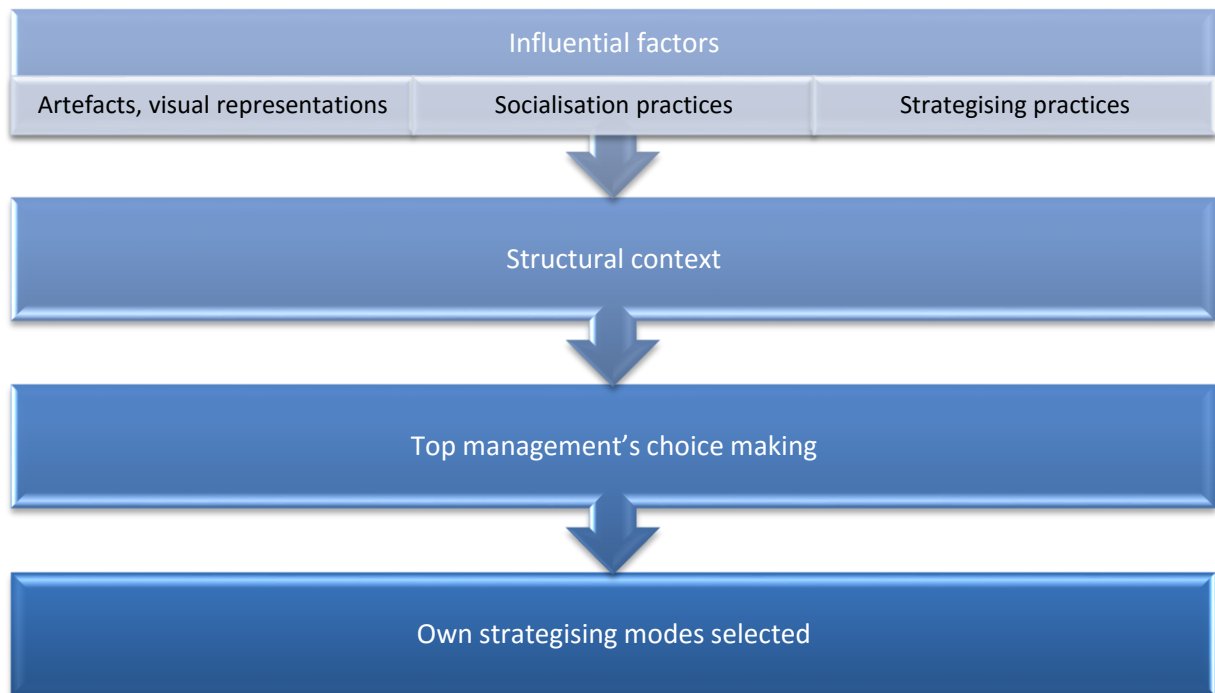


Figure 2.3: Structural context for top management's choice making

Source: Author's own compilation

Practices could be divided into three categories, namely, new practices, routine practices and strategising practices (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:922). Top management create new practices to enable strategy, and routine practices are the normal daily practices that help maintain the *status quo*. Traditional practices are similar to the routine practices, namely, the annual reviews, planning meetings and strategy workshops, each with its own limitations (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:922). However, the categories of these practices are subjective and open to interpretation. Moreover, there are limitations associated with these categories of strategising practices.

The limitations of these practices are considered in the following section.

### 2.2.1 Limitations of strategising practices

According to Vaara and Whittington (2012:24), there are various limitations to strategising practices, such as:

- restrictions of operations, (the conducive environment);

- need for the right technology, (the right systems);
- lack of enabling strategic tools, and (understanding the context); and
- limited availability of resources (budgets and funding).

There are other limitations. For instance, historical value systems and legacy issues, such as how things have always been done can affect the application of strategising practices. Furthermore, strategic tools may be misused, misunderstood, or incorrectly applied, for example, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis may limit the full impact of strategising practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:24). There is also the human factor that limits the application of strategising practices, for example in this study, the top management with the longest history or tenure who were set in their ways, exhibited limited appreciation of new ideas or the need for new strategising practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:24).

Limitations based on the individual top manager can be more nuanced. Certain top managers will have different thinking styles. Therefore, they may favour certain strategising practices above others. Moreover, the status of the individual top manager in the hierarchy, or their seniority, could also see them influence the choice of which strategising practices are applied in the organisation (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:27).

Other limitations on the application of strategising practices could be based on a strong personality dominating others within top management (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:27), influencing the organisation-specific socialisation practices. In social practice literature, these limitations represent the close attention paid to practices in general (Vieira, et al., 2013:582) and how they have evolved along with the practice movement.

These social practices are discussed in detail in the next section.

### **2.2.2 Social practices**

Social practice literature confronts the possible correlation between the social structures and individual agency of top management (Giroto, 2013:23). In this study, by observing these interactions, it could be revealed how these practices affect the overall strategy of the retail organisation.

Social practices, as described in social theories, describe how top management perform their roles within a social network, based on social institutions and using social

systems, social guides and social capital to construct a social order (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:4). Practice theory suggests that top managers' behaviour is embedded within a web of various social practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:4). In this study, it could indicate that praxis relies on the same social practices.

The factors that influence the choice of specific strategising practices are not well understood (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:4). What is understood is that the choices made by the individual top manager during interactions with the various parts of the organisation depend on a number of factors that are explained in the following section.

### **2.2.3 Top management interaction**

There is complicity between the organisation's social practices and the top management *habitus* or their personality structures (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:922). In this study, this complicity could affect the manner in which the strategising practices are eventually applied at the retail organisation.

Top management interaction is multi-faceted and can be studied through observing their interaction with a) textual documents, b) workshops, c) middle-management, and d) peers, as further described in the following sub-section.

#### **2.2.3.1 Top management's interaction with textual documents**

In strategising, top management's interactions are firstly shaped by the use of strategic plans, and secondly, these interactions are influenced by the physical textual documents on which the strategy is written (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013:5). The overall effect of strategic plans could be observed in the ways that top management interact with textual documents as references for their strategising (Vaara, 2010:10; Löwstedt, 2015:3). In this study, the underlying logic is that strategising practices captured in textual documentation, along with top management interaction make the organisation's strategic plans more meaningful.

#### **2.2.3.2 Top management's interaction with workshops**

Organisational workshops would lack meaning without interaction with top management. These workshops tend to be strategic formulation events that are conducted away from the daily operations of the organisation. They may not be overtly consequential for organisational strategic outcomes (Löwstedt, 2015:3). In this study,

they represent the influence of 'group thinking', as alignment among the participants is expected at these workshops. By their very nature, workshops are seen as team building events where individualism is subject to the whims of the team. Workshops require meaningful top management interaction (group thinking), which may later impact on the choice of the strategising practices required to realise the strategy.

#### **2.2.3.3    *Top management's interaction with middle management***

In this study, the value of top management's interaction with middle management lies in terms of how these top managers are perceived by middle managers. Again, top management could be seen as a collective, further reinforcing the notion of 'group thinking', in addition to 'group identity'.

Top management, however, are not one homogenous group, even though they could be seen as a collective. They are likely to be different individuals who would adopt the strategy as a political resource in order to support their own interests (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:11). In most cases, middle managers aspire to become part of the 'exclusive' level of top management. Therefore, they modify their behaviour and align their choice of strategising practices in line with what they perceive as advantageous to becoming future top managers.

#### **2.2.3.4    *Top management's interaction among themselves (peers)***

In contrast to the previous point about the individualism of top management, at times these top managers are a collective that have common ground and an alignment of values (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:48). In this study, top management are shown to have a unifying vision and they have the retail organisation's continuity in mind when they formulate the all-encompassing strategy.

Top managers, however, are likely to have varying degrees of expertise, although some of their skills could be complementary with the rest of the group of top managers (Modell, 2012:284). A group with limited expertise only works if they are aligned among themselves and there are no members with grand plans, creating their own vision. Some top managers are likely structuring their own mission and formulating their own department-focused strategy, in isolation. Without the clear institutional expertise of creating a vision, or of structuring a well-articulated mission and formulating a focused

strategy, top management, as a collective cannot fully exploit strategising practices (Modell, 2012:284).

Management's interaction with all the elements described above excludes a review of the individual manager's perception of themselves within the context of the organisational practices. According to Gomez and Bouty (2011:934), strategising practices rely on a complex mix of different individual elements:

- The individual manager's *habitus*, which needs to be seen within the context of top management as a group, and considering other fellow manager's *habitus*.
- Top management daily meaningful activities (micro-praxis), which need to be aligned to their macro-praxis (strategising).
- The incorporation of personal and social elements among top management as a group with social linkages.
- The process of eliciting new ways of engaging among themselves as top management engaged in devising a strategy.

It is important to understand that top management's interaction with social practices is relevant to the organisation. Social practices have been shown in other studies to rely on the visual representation of textual documents, as well as on traditional practices. Although these social practices influence the flow of work, they have limitations, and are in turn, equally informed by individual top management's interactions.

These socialisation practices, however, require explanation. The study will explain the structural context that exists when top management make practice choices. These social practices inform the methodology section of this study and are important to the classification of the data collection process.

The following section addresses socialisation practices in detail.

## **2.2.4 Socialisation practices**

Socialisation practices come in various forms, some come in the form of administration processes, and others are in the form of a discursive narrative (Floris, 2014:61). In this study, they are observed using jargon and language specific to the retail organisation.

Other socialisation practices are episodic in nature, capturing major events in the organisation's life cycle. Some socialisation practices are procedural, and formulate "how things are done" and inform organisational behaviour (Floris, 2014:61).

Table 2.2 contains a list of examples of socialisation practices in an organisational context.

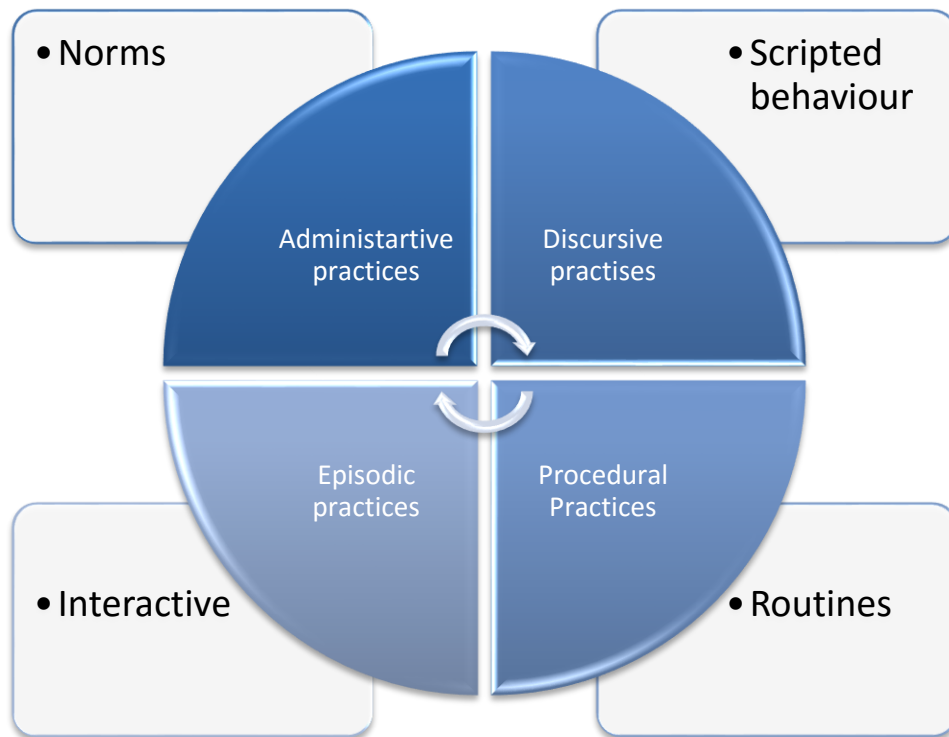
**Table 2.2: Examples of socialisation practices**

<b>SOCIALISATION PRACTICES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meetings, weekly management meetings</li> <li>▪ Workshops, crisis management</li> <li>▪ Plans, short-term goals, targets, tactics</li> <li>▪ Budgets (short-term, for example, weekly)</li> <li>▪ Procedures (for example, day-to-day)</li> <li>▪ Enacted ethics, practiced values</li> <li>▪ Frameworks, thematic use of tools</li> <li>▪ Scripted behaviour, accepted norms</li> <li>▪ Code of conduct, disciplined work, consequences</li> <li>▪ Language use, lingo, jargon specific to the organisation</li> <li>▪ Storytelling, legends, past glories, nostalgia.</li> </ul>
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Adapted from: Balogun *et al.*, (2013:15) and Blasco (2012:368).

Figure 2.4 is an illustration of how socialisation practices can be grouped in a thematic manner. The figure provides a representation of how norms, scripted behaviour, routines, and interactive activities are thematically grouped within the administrative practices, discursive practices, and episodic and procedural practices. Administrative functions are the planning mechanisms, control systems and performance indicators while scripted behaviour refers to activities that are prescribed by the organisation (Floris, 2014:61).

The discursive practices are involved in interacting about strategy via conversation and casual engagement. Episodic practices represent the daily activities such as meetings and workshops (Floris, 2014:61).



**Figure 2.4: Discursive multi-modal rhetorical strategy practices**

Source: Adapted from Floris (2014)

All these practices rely on artefacts and practices to enable top managers to drive the strategising process. In the following section, artefacts and practices are discussed to build on the above review of socialisation practices. Artefacts are relevant to this research as they are objects meaningfully used daily by top management.

### **2.2.5 Artefacts and visual representation**

Artefacts are material objects used in strategising practices (Vesa, 2013:25). Different managers can interpret these artefacts differently and their application may be flexible, depending on each situation (Vesa, 2013:25; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013:1).



Artefacts can also be used as visual representations, and these visual representations serve the following purpose, they (Floris, Grant & Cutcher, 2013:4):

- create meaning
- convey information
- mirror strategy processes
- facilitate shifts between usage, giving rise to alternative options during strategising
- are utilised in making sense of the nuanced aspects of any situation that top management find themselves in (Garreau, Mouricou & Grimand, 2015:18).

Strategic meaning can be created using artefacts while some goals and purposes can be achieved via the use of artefacts (Garreau *et al.*, 2015:17). For example, at the retail organisation, when a property site is being considered for a new branch, extensive visual artefacts, such as photographs, maps, Google images overlaid with income distribution matrixes and marketing reports and images, are required and are presented to the board of directors before a final decision to invest is made.

Artefacts can have distinguishing structural features built in, meaning that artefacts could have various uses and applications. Artefacts, therefore, can be said to have characteristics that are flexible in their interpretation (Garreau *et al.*, 2015:17).

Table 2.3 provides a list of examples of artefacts within strategising.

**Table 2.3: Examples of artefacts**

<b>ARTEFACTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Photos, visual representations of vision</li> <li>▪ PowerPoint presentations, overhead projectors</li> <li>▪ Planning documents, flipcharts</li> <li>▪ Textual documents, official papers</li> <li>▪ Maps, locations</li> <li>▪ Posters, visual images.</li> </ul>
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Source: Adapted from Vesa (2013:25) and Jarzabkowski *et al.*, (2013:1)

The interpretation of artefacts is said to inform the structural context of strategising (Garreau *et al.*, 2015:17). In this study, top management uses the structural context to channel the resources of the retail organisation. The structural context of strategising involves the administrative procedures of the organisation (Jarzabkowski, 2008:622).

Top managers establish administrative procedures to function as the structural context between the corporate level strategising and the daily socialisation practices taking

place at the operational level (Jarzabkowski, 2008:622). Administrative procedures include planning, resource allocation, monitoring, and those control systems that enable strategising (Löwstedt, 2015:3).

Administrative procedures have patterns of social interaction that impact on the organisational plans. The administration of plans creates the structural context from where actual strategising becomes possible, especially when patterns emerge of how plans align across divisions and regions (Löwstedt, 2015:33). In this study, the administration procedures of top management were consolidated in a large-scale project, where all the back-office functions, common among divisions and regions were grouped together in a recognisable pattern and centred in one business area.

### **2.2.6 Emerging patterns**

A pattern emerges when strategising practices are grouped together and it becomes noticeable that certain social practices dominate meaningful activities. The pattern resides in both the time perspective and the spatial perspective of activities (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:4). Some strategising practices were established in the past at the retail organisation that are still being applied in the present time. From the spatial perspective, the patterns demonstrate the relationship between the industry practices and the structural circumstances of the organisation (Löwstedt, 2015:68). In this study, the human resource function, the buying function, the supply chain function, the demand planning function, and the information technology function were centralised (industry practice) at the case organisation, based on the emergent patterns within strategising practices common to these functions.

The next section is a review of how top management engage in choice making.

### **2.2.7 Choice making**

Choice- making is similar to management decision-making, as it is required when distributing resources within the organisation (Whittington, 2004:62; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007; Vesa, 2013:99; Löwstedt, 2015:56). There is a process for the distribution of these resources, possibly influenced by top management's use of strategising practices.

There is situational use of choice making that is required of top management. Therefore, choice making requirements are not static, and change over time (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013). To that end, the following five strategising practices can be chosen, and applied in various situations or in different environmental realities (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013):

- Selecting practices: These are about ranking priorities (it was highlighted during the interview stage that the organisation had too many projects running at the same time);
- Locating practices: These are about geographic location (during interviews participants referred to the large scale ‘centralisation project’ that the organisation underwent);
- Analysing practices: These are about pattern recognition (in this study, reference is made to environmental scanning and market competition);
- Enumerating practices: These are about giving value to an act (this is similar to return on investment calculations); and
- Physicalising practices: These are about the actual physical properties of material.

In this study, the various situations (or environmental realities) were limited to ‘crisis’ situations, ‘dominant’ situations and ‘organisational’ situations. Under each of these situations, top management need to make choices as to which strategising practices could be applied.

The strategising practices are summarised in the following section. This is followed by a brief review of the modes of strategising practices undertaken to classify all the various strategising practices under their various themes. These themes were applied in the research methodology chapter.

### **2.2.8 Modes of strategising practices**

The term ‘modes of strategising practices’ refers to the thematic grouping of the various strategising practices based on their usage to enable a strategy (Floris, 2014:61; Garreau *et al.*, 2015:18).

Table 2.4 presents a summary of the various strategising practices as found in the literature review. Top managers apply these practices to divergent situations to address the non-identical parts of strategising (Floris, 2014:61; Garreau *et al.*,

2015:18). In this study, these practices are grouped into thematic modes. In this list, some of the practices appear under multiple headings and are at times duplicated or termed differently.

**Table 2.4: Summary modes of top management strategising practices**

STRATEGISING PRACTICE	EXAMPLES
<b>Episodic practices</b>	Strategy meetings, quarterly reviews/workshops, bi-annual reviews/reviews, monthly standstills / administrative practices, management reports / filing, historic, financial year-end books / emails, corporate communications (Floris, 2014:61).
<b>Material practices</b>	Strategic tools / computers, cell phones, pagers, alarms / desks, furniture, physical objects, utensils, stationery / whiteboards, flipcharts, artefacts / post-its, text messages (sms), WhatsApp, updates notices / spreadsheets, systems / telephones, communication tools / digital representations / work documents (Garreau <i>et al.</i> , 2015:18).
<b>Praxis</b>	Workflow, organogram, structure/meetings, updates, performance reviews/ number crunching, budgeting / analysing, reviewing / form filling, systems method and procedures / organisational norms, behaviour, values / jargon, conversations (Jarzabkowski <i>et al.</i> , 2013:5)
<b>Discursive practices</b>	Understanding the deep meaning of the strategy/debating, managing and modifying the strategy / agreeing to the strategy / simplifying the strategy / selling the strategy to all stakeholders / communicating the strategy internally and externally (Floris <i>et al.</i> , 2013:4)

Source: Adapted from Floris (2014:61) and Garreau *et al.*, (2015:18)

For the purposes of this study, strategising practices were categorised into themes. Some of the themes were based on similar activities, for example, ‘material’ or ‘episodic’ or ‘discursive’ had some common activities across them. The themes were arranged to enable the further analysis of the data collected from the application of the TSI instrument and the interview schedule.

## 2.2.9 Summary of strategising practices

The literature review of strategising practices started with a review of how socialising practices play a role in top management choice making. Artefacts and practices were viewed as aspects that broaden the base of how strategising is done. The structural context and the administrative process were included in the review to demonstrate how they could be grouped into themes.

In the socialising practices, the discursive, multi-modal, rhetorical strategy model was used to set the context of understanding the various strategising practices. With regard to applying a structural context to practices, reference was made to the circumstances (situations or environmental realities) in which the organisation found itself. Reference was also made to the role of middle managers who engage with routine practices and administration practices. Both routine and administration practices were grouped under the organisational norms for top management.

For the purposes of this study, the following seven strategising practices were investigated:

- praxis
- artefacts
- material practices
- episodic practices
- discursive practices
- organisational norms
- context-specific socialisation.

The above section concludes the review of strategising practices as a unit of observation in this study.

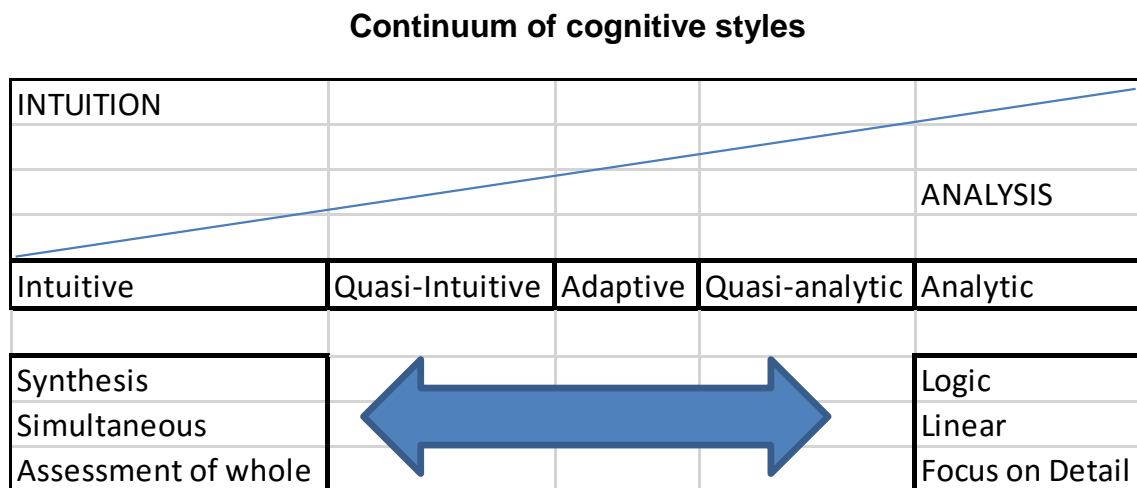
The following section discusses the background theories that make up the basis for the second research unit of observation of thinking styles and the available and current literature review of the theories related to thinking styles. The section starts with brief discussion of the cognitive continuum theory and the theory of mental self-government. In this study, it is proposed that these two theories can be used primarily to understand the thinking styles variable and then the choices of strategising practices top management make.

## **2.3 COGNITIVE CONTINUUM THEORY**

The cognitive continuum theory (CCT) refers to the duality of consciousness, reflecting the dichotomy in which an individual top manager is deemed either analytical or intuitive (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:2). In their study, Hammond, Hamm, Grassia, and Pearson (1987) compared the efficacy of intuitive and analytical cognition. Their

premise, based on their earlier work from 1984, was that both cognitive processes and task conditions could be arranged on a continuum that runs from intuition to analysis (Hammond *et al.*, 1987). Originally, Hammond *et al.* (1987) developed the cognitive continuum index that has evolved into a theory.

Figure 2.5 represents this continuum of the thinking styles scale, ranging from intuition on the left side, to analysis on the right side. The centre of the figure shows progressive steps towards either of these ends (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:2).



**Figure 2.5: Continuum of cognitive style**

Source: Allinson and Hayes (2012:4)

Top managers who are rated closer to the intuition end of the scale will display thinking attributes that show that they synthesise information, act simultaneously, and have the ability to see the whole picture (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:2). On the other hand, top managers who are rated closer to the analysis end of the scale, display the thinking attributes of logic, linear thinking and great attention to detail (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:2).

There are two continua on the CCT: a) for the thinking mode, ranges from analysis at the one end to intuition at the other, b) for tasks, ranges from the analysis-inducing to the intuition-inducing (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:3). The approach is consistent with the Jungian personality-type theory (Ginn & Sexton, 1990), which is founded on Carl Jung's research. Later, Katherine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers developed a psychometric instrument, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), using Jung's theory of psychological types (Bradley & Hebert, 1997). There is a link between task performance and a specific thinking style, which suggests that the thinking style

of a particular top manager may fall at any point between analysis and intuition. In addition, Allinson and Hayes (2012:3) found that the greater the correspondence between the thinking mode and the task at hand, the better the task performance and the greater the outcome (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:3).

Associated with the CCT is the notion that individual top managers will prefer a particular thinking mode. In direct contrast, the CCT could be described as a core component of thinking that informs the dual consciousness of top managers' thinking styles, and reflects the ability of top managers to respond adaptively to a changing environment (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:3). The CCT is the formation of dual consciousness attributes in thinking styles that inform what strategic thinking is (Nuntamanop *et al.*, 2013:247).

In this study, in order for top management to conceptualise strategy, it is proposed that CCT cannot be considered on its own. It is proposed that a strong sense of the 'self' is required from top managers for them to thrive at conceptualising. Therefore, in this study, it is proposed that mental self-government is required to optimise the CCT. In the following section, mental self-government is reviewed in detail.

### **2.3.1 Sternberg (1988) theory of mental self-government**

This theory is based on Sternberg's (1988) early work on models of the mind, in which he proposes that the model of intelligence could be understood as mental self-government. The basic idea is to try to understand the psychology of human beings in terms of governments, by using government as a "large scale externalised mirror of the mind" Sternberg (1988:200).

As Sternberg (1988:200) states, the three main functions of government are the legislative, executive and judicial. In contrast, the four major forms of government are monarchic, hierarchic, oligarchic, and anarchic. The two basic levels of government are global and the local; the two domains of scope are internal (domestic affairs) and external (foreign affairs); while the two leanings are conservative and progressive.

Sternberg's (1988:197) work explored intellectual styles as a bridge between intelligence and personality. In addition, Sternberg (1988) defined intelligence as "*...the ability to adapt in order to meet the demands of the environment effectively*". The point of Sternberg's (1988) work was to suggest the key to understanding an

individual's performance in various spheres of life is they "seek to match their preferred intellectual styles" to situations drawing on these styles. Furthermore, he shows there are six variables affecting the use of intellectual styles (Sternberg, 1988:212):

- Culture – Some cultures are likely to be more rewarding of certain styles.
- Gender – Traditionally, some styles are more acceptable in males than females.
- Age – Some styles change as people grow and mature.
- Parenting – Some styles are encouraged and nurtured.
- Religion – Some religions encourage certain intellectual styles.
- Schooling / occupation – Some styles are rewarded and reinforced by the environment.

In a progressive move, Sternberg (1988) showed that the view of intelligence as mental self-government focuses more on styles of thinking than on levels of intelligence. Mental self-government (MSG) was later defined as an individual's need to govern their daily activities and how that individual uses their thoughts to 'adapt' to their environment (Sternberg, 1990:367). The shift from Sternberg's 1988 study to the 1990 study showed a shift from a 'preferred style' to an 'adapted style'. Mental self-government describes intelligence styles that are used in each situation, showing that, just as there are many ways of governing society, there are just as many ways of governing an individual manager's thinking (Betoret & Artiga, 2014:89).

In his research, Sternberg (1988:204) showed that individuals do not have one or another style exclusively; rather they specialise and show a propensity for a particular thinking style at particular time. As the individual grows and gains experience in handling various situations, their MSG also develops (Sternberg, 1988; Murphy, 2006:28). Their thinking styles can change as managers mature. This does not mean that certain styles are right and others are wrong. What determines whether a style is effective is the match between the style and the situation in which it is being applied (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:28). This study researched the 'match' and attempted to understand these 'situations' (or environmental realities) under which a thinking style would change.

The influences from the environmental and the societal impact shape the top management's thinking styles. In the theory of mental self-government, the top manager would adjust their thinking to suit each situation. Therefore, their thinking



styles could be modifiable. The study examines the 'suitability', the modification, and what these 'situations' (or environmental realities) could be.

This study makes a tentative link between CCT and MSG owing to Sternberg's (1988:211) view that thinking styles can be represented on a 'continuum'. While this is a weak link, it serves the purpose of this study to link CCT and MSG in a unified perspective that directly links into the second research unit of observation of thinking styles, as discussed in the following section.

## **2.4 THINKING STYLES**

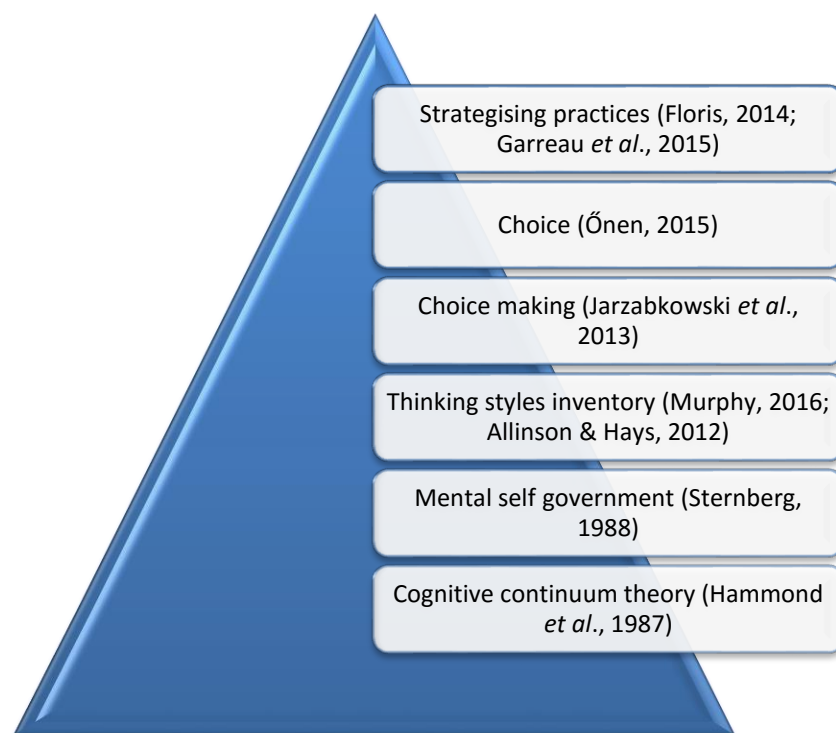
The background to thinking styles has been given in the previous section. Thinking styles demonstrate how flexible top managers are in their style of thinking and how they are able to substitute and apply their thoughts to various situations (Sternberg & Wagner, 1992; Murphy, 2006:28). Top management can learn different thinking abilities; for example, they should be able to use their thinking abilities to disassociate from the current situation and to elevate the focus of their thinking to an alternate outcome (Fortunato & Furey, 2012:850). Thinking styles are dependent on the individual top manager and the situation they face (Betoret & Artiga, 2014:90). In this study, one thinking style could be used successfully in a specific situation while it could fail in another situation.

Figure 2.6 illustrates how the researcher aligned the main theories around cognition and thinking styles in order to arrive at an image of what this study proposes. At the base of the image, is the cognitive continuum theory. The second layer of the image is Sternberg's (1988) theory of mental self-government. The theory adds an additional dynamic to the different interpretations of the cognitive process, as one interpretation is Sternberg's (1988) suggestion that thinking styles are based on mental self-government. For the third layer, the researcher suggests Murphy's (2006) research and the work of Allinson and Hayes (2102) and an updated interpretation of the TSI, still based on the early work of Sternberg (1988). What Allinson and Hayes (2012) add is their review of other multiple alternative options to understanding cognition.

Figure 2.6 is the research proposition. Choice making is shown as the next layer as the research is about top management's choice of strategising practices and their thinking styles. The fourth layer is driven by operationalising thinking styles by

suggesting that there are specific processes required and choices to be made once thinking styles are understood. Jarzabkowski, Spee and Smets (2013) proposed that choice making and decision-making are highly nuanced by thinking abilities.

This study suggests that Önen's (2015) Threefold model of intellectual styles comprise the fifth layer as it complements the previous layers in grouping thinking styles into three broad themes. The study ultimately is about the specific strategising practices top management use and what their thinking styles are that might possibly inform their choices. None of the theories, making up the image of the study, has previously been aligned together, and they represent the researcher's selection in attempting to answer the research question.



**Figure 2.6: Selected theories pivotal the study in one view**

Source: Researcher's own compilation

Figure 2.6 supports this study's perspective that the theories on thinking styles, the cognitive continuum theory, and mental self-government are regarded as strategising thought processes. Top management apply these thinking theories subconsciously while busy with choice making about specific strategising practices.

The study investigated how top management thinking styles possibly related to their choice of strategising practices. Seen in this light, research has shown that different

mental capacities are made up of different thinking styles that ultimately reflect top management's mental elasticity. Mental elasticity (or capacity) can be regarded as the range of thinking styles that each top manager can employ (Goldman, 2012:26; Fortunato & Furey, 2012:849; Zhang, 2013:9).

Sternberg (1990), Sternberg and Wagner (1992) and later, Murphy's (2006) research on thinking styles covered the topics mentioned above, namely, thinking styles, cognitive continuum theory and mental self-government. In the following section, the TSI is explored in detail, as it is identified as the instrument best suited for use in this study.

#### **2.4.1 Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) (Sternberg & Wagner, 1992)**

Murphy's (2006) research is based on the work done by Sternberg, (1988; 1997), as well as research by Sternberg and Grigorenko (1995a:201), who maintained that thinking styles constitute an interface between intelligence and personality. The TSI premise suggests that management display thinking styles along five dimensions, namely, the function dimension, the form dimension, the level dimension, the scope, and the direction of leaning, as illustrated in Table 1.2 (Sternberg & Wagner, 1992; Murphy, 2006:29). Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) TSI list was selected to be applied as the primary instrument in this study, for the reasons stated in Chapter 1.

##### **2.4.1.1 *Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) and thematic patterns***

Fortunato and Furey (2012:849) demonstrate that individuals manifest different patterns of thinking styles depending on their thinking perspective profile. It is possible that when reviewing a series of choices made by top management, a pattern would appear of which strategising practices they use and how that pattern was influenced by a particular thinking style. In the study, the pattern could be used to classify the strategising practices into themes and into group thinking styles based on the emergent patterns (Fortunato & Furey, 2012:856). However, critics of the TSI state that there is no holistic approach to considering the various TSI styles, and that the influence of other variables, such as time, would not yield meaningful data (Fortunato & Furey, 2012:856). This view would deny future researchers the opportunity of grouping TSI styles into themes that show an impact by other variables.

Other research into thinking styles mostly applied a cross-sectional design to their theory approach. This suggested that a temporal sequence was required to establish a pattern of cause–effect relationships (Betoret & Artiga, 2014:96). Longitudinal studies of some thinking styles would be necessary to map the top management choice making abilities and to find patterns in their thinking that could lead to a unifying dominant idea about thinking styles and choice-making (Betoret & Artiga, 2014:96). A longitudinal study, however, would be subject to the impact of the cultural setting, among other considerations, such as geography, demographics, and history.

The following section briefly describes the impact of culture.

#### **2.4.1.2     *Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) and culture***

Culture is defined as the customs and civilisations of a particular time of a group of people. Wang and Tseng (2015:521) assert that some cultures are more inclined to analytic thinking, whereas other cultures are more inclined to holistic thinking. Culture is made up of the history of communities, sets of combined beliefs, specific value systems, their localised experiences, educational systems, and responses to the exposure to other cultures. Cross-cultural differences in thinking styles are likely informed by value systems and traditions, which imply that differential cognitive tendencies are rooted in the different social practices (Wang & Tseng, 2015:521). In this study, social practices are addressed in detail in Section 2.2.2.

Strategy scholars have neglected to study fully the impact of culture on thinking styles. Sternberg (1990) suggests that there are cultural dimensions to be considered within the application of thinking styles. Zhang and Sternberg (2001) researched thinking styles across cultures. However, their study focused on understanding the students' learning abilities. 'Organisational culture' is briefly referenced in some of their research. Furthermore, the TSI has been linked to specific cultures, for example, Zhang (2001) researched the TSI and Chinese culture, later Zhang studied the TSI and Filipino students, and then students in Hong Kong. Wang and Tseng (2015) focused on Taiwanese male students. All these studies draw on specific culture issues, but still do not provide a broad cultural consideration of the TSI.

The differences in thinking styles could be influenced by culture and the language used in the interpretation of the 13 subscales in the TSI. To test this, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was previously applied (Murphy, 2006:78). Further, to prevent

the incidence of type 1 errors, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was previously conducted on related dependent variables (Murphy, 2006:78).

The next section shows how the TSI uses categories of 'functions' and 'dimensions' to make the referencing of thinking styles easier.

#### **2.4.1.3     *Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) categories, functions and dimensions***

Table 2.5 depicts the TSI as having 13 thinking styles that fall into five categories of dimensions of mental self-government (Sternberg, 1988; Sternberg & Wagner, 1992):

- The scope is the thinking range.
- The levels reflect the thinking plane.
- The form is the manifestation of thinking.
- The leanings are the thinking inclinations.
- The functions dimension is concerned with the type of purpose that thinking elicits.

The function dimension includes the legislative, executive and judicial thinking styles. The form dimension includes the hierarchical, oligarchic, monarchic, and anarchic styles. The level dimension includes the liberal and conservative styles. The scope dimension includes the internal and external styles, and the leaning dimension includes the liberal and conservative styles (Sternberg & Wagner, 1992).

Table 2.5 provides an explanation of the thinking styles that fall under the TSI categories of function, form, level, scope, and leaning. A short version of this table was introduced in Chapter 1, while Table 2.5 presents an expanded version of the same table providing more detail.

**Table 2.5: Expanded version of the TSI**

<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	
<b>Legislative style</b>	Top managers who prefer tasks requiring creative strategies, and problems that are not pre-structured. These managers prefer constructive planning-based activities. They may be viewed as not fitting in well with the rest of the team.
<b>Executive style</b>	Top managers who are more concerned with the implementation of tasks with set guidelines. They like to enforce rules and laws and rely on existing methods to complete tasks or master a situation. They tend to be valued by organisations as they stick to rules.
<b>Judicial style</b>	Top managers who focus their attention on evaluating the products of other's activities. These managers like to judge both the structure and the content of work, delivering critiques, giving opinions, judging people and their work. They tend to evaluate and to be good at evaluating programmes.
<b>FORMS</b>	
<b>Monarchic style</b>	Top managers who prefer tasks that allow a complete focus on one thing at a time. These managers tend to be motivated by a single goal, on which they can focus single-mindedly until the task is completed.
<b>Hierarchical style</b>	Top managers who prefer to focus their attention across several tasks that are prioritised. They adapt themselves to the organisation (Zadeh & Angazi, 2016:91). This style characterises managers who tend to be priority setters who allocate resources carefully and are extremely systematic and organised.
<b>Oligarchic style</b>	Top managers who prefer to work towards multiple objectives during the same period, without setting clear priorities. They are interested, oriented and determined to do all things at the same time (Zadeh & Angazi 2016:91). These managers are often flexible and can adapt quickly to changing circumstances but may have trouble allocating resources, therefore often need support to complete tasks.
<b>Anarchic style</b>	Top managers who prefer working on tasks that require no system at all. The anarchist method can be considered coincidental (Zadeh & Angazi, 2016:91). This style characterises top managers who use a random approach to solving problems and have the potential for creativity, as they are not constrained by boundaries of thought.

LEVELS	
<b>Local style</b>	Top managers who prefer tasks requiring working with details. These managers prefer to deal with specific tasks that often require precision to complete.
<b>Global style</b>	Top managers who pay more attention to the overall picture regarding an issue and to abstract ideas. These are managers who conceptualise, who work in the world of big ideas and they struggle to deal with finer details.
SCOPE	
<b>Internal style</b>	Top managers who prefer being engaged in tasks that allow working independently. These managers tend to be introverted, task oriented, at times aloof and socially less sensitive, and they avoid group work.
<b>External style</b>	Top managers who prefer being engaged in tasks that provide opportunities for developing interpersonal relationships. These managers tend to be more extroverted, people oriented, outgoing, socially more sensitive and interpersonally more aware.
LEANINGS	
<b>Liberal style</b>	Top managers who prefer novelty and ambiguity. Liberal managers think beyond laws and programmes (Zadeh & Angazi, 2016:91). This style characterises top managers who like to go beyond existing rules and procedures, who seek to maximise change and they tend to be receptive to new ways of thinking.
<b>Conservative style</b>	Top managers who adhere to existing rules and procedures in performing tasks. They follow existing programmes (Zadeh & Angazi, 2016:91). They are managers who minimise change, avoid ambiguous situations where possible, and prefer familiarity in life and work. Conservative managers follow traditions, as their own ideas are grounded in existing and accepted customs, and they resist new ways of doing things.

Source: Sternberg and Wagner (1992)

The TSI has elements that are similar to intellectual styles constructs. The similarity is explored in detail in the following section.

#### **2.4.1.4 Thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) and intellectual styles**

An 'intellectual style' refers to an individual's preferred ways of processing information, of dealing with their daily tasks and of using their thinking abilities (Sternberg, 1988; Sternberg, 1990). On the contrary, thinking styles are defined as the individual's preferred thinking process and is the mental processing of information (Karakas, 2011:198). There is a grouping of intellectual styles that has been applied to this

research (Önen, 2015:84). In this study, these intellectual styles have attributes that could be used to improve top management's abilities regarding the choice making of strategising practices.

Önen's (2015) 'Threefold model of intellectual styles' is applied as an integrated model that pertains to intellectual styles and was used to relate the top management thinking styles to broader themes. In Table 2.6, the Önen (2015) Threefold model of intellectual styles has been adapted and integrated with the TSI in order to draw out the patterns in top management thinking. The table shows that the TSI can also be classified into three categories, namely styles that are creative (Type I), styles that simplify practices and processes (Type II), and a combination of creativity and simplicity (Type III) (Önen, 2015:84).

**Table 2.6: Thinking styles and Intellectual styles**

TYPE I: THINKING STYLES – CREATIVITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creative styles choice making is ill-structured, requiring management to process information in a more complex way to make a choice (Önen, 2015:84).</li> <li>▪ Creativity correlates positively with management attributes that are traditionally regarded as positive, for example: a deep approach to learning, higher cognitive developmental levels, a holistic mode of thinking, and the openness personality trait (Betoret &amp; Artiga, 2014:90).</li> <li>▪ TSI examples include - legislative, judicial, hierarchical, global and liberal styles (Murphy, 2006:30)</li> </ul>
Type II: Thinking styles – Simplicity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ With simplicity, there is a preference for well-structured tasks that allow choice making in a more simplistic way.</li> <li>▪ Simplicity correlates with sensing and judging personality types, there is a concrete-sequential mind style, the surface approach to learning and the analytic mode of thinking (Önen, 2015:84).</li> <li>▪ Correlated with management attributes that are traditionally considered negatively as in lower self-esteem, lower cognitive developmental levels, analytic mode of thinking, and the neuroticism personality trait (Betoret &amp; Artiga, 2014:90).</li> </ul>



### TYPE III: COMBINATION

- These styles combine elements of creativity and simplicity. These are thinking styles defined as sensing, judging, concrete-sequential mind, surface approach to learning and the analytic mode of thinking (Betoret & Artiga 2014:89).
- TSI examples include executive, local, monarchic, and conservative styles (Murphy, 2006:30).
- The introverted and extroverted personality types, the abstract random and abstract sequential mind styles and the integrative mode of thinking (Murphy, 2006:35).
- Preferences for choice making that requires higher levels of cognitive complexity and tasks that require conformity to norms and lower levels of cognitive complexity (Önen, 2015:84).
- Thinking styles defined as random and abstract (Betoret & Artiga, 2014:89)
- TSI examples include: anarchic, oligarchic, internal and external styles (Murphy, 2006:30)

Source: Adapted from Önen (2015:84)

The relationship these styles have with choice making is described in each category, followed by a description of the correlation of attributes, followed by examples based on the TSI categories. The first grouping shows styles that are classified as Type I, as they generate creativity and utilise higher levels of cognitive complexity (Önen, 2015:84). The second grouping is Type II, and these are styles that are norm-favouring and simplistic (Önen, 2015:84). The third grouping is Type III that is a combination of the first two types and draws on characteristics of both of the previous two types, depending on the situation (or environmental realities).

In this study, the three types of thinking styles allow for the grouping of the various thinking styles in the TSI into similar choice-making patterns, and into groups with similar problem-solving attributes in choosing strategising practices. The grouping of these thinking styles, however, does not adequately cover the natural conflict that arises between the various thinking styles. Specifically, the styles in the Type I group are related negatively to styles in the Type II group. On the contrary, the management styles in the Type III group would be moderately positively related to styles in both the Type I and Type II groups (Önen, 2015:84). The implication is that the way these type conflicts influence strategising could be uncovered by this study.

Table 2.7 below depicts an overview of the literature review on thinking styles. Firstly, it presents the key outcomes of the cognitive thinking styles related to top management's ability. Thereafter follows a list of the cognitive continuum attributes of task performance, the ability to adapt and the reliance on intuition. Thirdly, the table

includes the consideration of mental self-government where patterns of thought and their impact are explored in detail. Ultimately, the choice-making stage is presented, which includes a summary of the choice of which strategising practices are to be selected.

**Table 2.7: Overview of thinking styles literature**

<p><b>THE KEY AREAS COVERED WITHIN THE COGNITIVE THINKING STYLES ARE:</b> (Sternberg, 1988; Sternberg 1990; Murphy, 2006:3; Betoret &amp; Artiga, 2014:89; Goldman <i>et al.</i>, 2015:157)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ That top management's thinking displays problem-solving skills;</li> <li>▪ That their experience shows improvement from the novice to the expert level of thinking; and</li> <li>▪ That their choice making distinguishes between various strategising options.</li> </ul>
<p><b>THE KEY AREAS EMANATING FROM THE COGNITIVE CONTINUUM THEORY ARE:</b> (Allinson &amp; Hayes, 2012:2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ That top managers' thinking is task-orientated in its performance;</li> <li>▪ That these managers could respond adaptively to new input; and</li> <li>▪ That some reliance is placed on their ability to analyse, or their intuition.</li> </ul>
<p><b>THE KEY CONCEPTS REGARDING THE MENTAL SELF-GOVERNMENT ARE:</b> (Sternberg, 1988; Sternberg, 1990:367; Sternberg &amp; Wagner, 1992; Murphy, 2006:38; Betoret &amp; Artiga, 14:89; Zhang, 2013:44)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ That there are patterns of thoughts;</li> <li>▪ That certain internal mental states are displayed by top managers when they strategise;</li> <li>▪ The personality traits of top managers imprint themselves on their thinking styles; and</li> <li>▪ That thinking agility is a skill.</li> </ul>
<p><b>THE KEY AREAS FOR TOP MANAGEMENT IN CHOICE-MAKING ARE:</b> (Fortunato &amp; Furey, 2012:850; Nuntamanop, Kauranen &amp; Igel, 2013:251)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ That they consider the past, the present and the future aspects of thinking;</li> <li>▪ That their thinking displays simplicity, creativity or a combination of the two;</li> <li>▪ That choice-making, unlike decision-making, prioritises preferred options; and</li> <li>▪ That ultimately, top management must manage and allocate resources.</li> </ul>

Source: Author's own compilation

In the following section, thinking styles are explained in detail, starting with how they interact with mental capacity.

### **2.4.2 Thinking styles and mental capacity**

Thinking is defined as the mental action of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thoughts, experiences and the senses (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:6). Thinking is defined as the action of using one's mind to produce thoughts (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:6; Vaara & Whittington, 2012:8).

In business management studies, thinking is the mental act of processing information in order to make sense of it (Goldman, 2012:27). Thinking capacity varies among different top managers and has multiple styles associated with its range (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:170). There are determined limits to the thinking capacity of the individual top managers, as some may have more experience than others may. The acquisition of improved thinking abilities by top management entails their journey from being a novice thinker to an expert strategist (Goldman, 2012:27; Goldman *et al.*, 2015:170).

In this study, the thinking styles capture the ability of top management to perceive their own internal mental states, their own personal motives and their own behaviour within the context of their environment, while solving the retail organisation's problems.

### **2.4.3 Thinking styles and problem solving**

Scholars developed theories of thinking styles to explain why members of top management differ in their approaches to solving problems (Sternberg, 1988; Murphy, 2006:3; Goldman *et al.*, 2015:157). It was noted that prior knowledge regarding a manager's thinking style could be valuable in problem-solving. Individual top manager's problem-solving abilities could result in their being selected for special projects or being placed in specific positions (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:5).

As higher-order personality traits (Murphy, 2006:27; Allinson & Hayes, 2012:29), thinking styles could explain the trends displayed by top management when they choose strategising practices and when they solve problems. These problems could be, for example, resource allocation, planning processes for projects, considering competitor tactics, leadership shortfalls, and operational control.

In order for top management to apply strategising practices, they require strategic thinking abilities, which are discussed in the following section.

#### **2.4.4 Thinking styles and strategic thinking**

Strategic thinking is the ability to develop and maintain the conceptual mind maps of an organisation. It includes the ability to integrate the changes initiated outside the organisation's context, outside of daily actions and outside of expected performance, which is often required in the conceptualisation of a new strategy (Nuntamanop *et al.*, 2013:247).

The strategising processes are composed of strategic intent, choice making and assessment, as aspects that are equally central to strategic thinking (Nuntamanop *et al.*, 2013:251). Strategic thinking includes five elements that lead to choosing the appropriate strategising practices: firstly, having a system perspective, secondly, being intent focused, thirdly, thinking in time, fourthly, being hypothesis-driven and lastly, acting in an intelligently opportunistic manner (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2012:2; Balogun *et al.*, 2013:3; Nuntamanop *et al.*, 2013:251).

In this study, various experiences that top management might have while managing strategic challenges, such as a crisis affecting normal operations, or responding to competitor initiatives, could be shown to improve their ability to think strategically, thereby improving their choice-making ability in terms of applying strategising practices.

#### **2.4.5 Thinking styles and correlations**

Various thinking constructs have been developed to provide a possible reasoning behind the discrepancy between strategic thinking and strategising. The discrepancy can be researched by pairing thinking styles with other variables, for example, top management thinking styles with 'methods of communicating' (Murphy, 2006:27) or, top management thinking styles with 'individual differences in performance' (Sternberg, 1997).

The topic of thinking styles is also found in thinking psychology literature, and is briefly discussed in the following section.

#### **2.4.6 Thinking psychology literature**

Current thinking psychology literature focuses on the thinking differences as displayed by management in the same organisation (Betoret & Artiga, 2014:89). Different top

managers in the same organisation may display the following dominant thinking styles (Karakas, 2011:217):

- The holistic thinking that is displayed by managers with a strong objective perspective on operational things;
- The interconnected thinking that is common among well-networked managers;
- The mechanical thinking normally identified with technically-minded managers;
- The integrative or creative thinking by managers with an artistic flair;
- The paradoxical thinking that is a strong trait among managers who thrive in chaos theory;
- The systematic thinking of those managers who prefer systems, methods and procedures; and
- The dynamic thinking style normally displayed by charismatic managers with good leadership styles.

Dynamic thinking, for example, is associated with organisational transformation that requires management to display integrative, non-linear and dynamic thinking owing to the increasing complexity of management practices (Karakas, 2011:202).

The following section discusses how top management, while thinking strategically, could then utilise informed choice-making strategising practices.

#### **2.4.7 Choice making**

Choice making is based on decision-making as part of rational choice theory (Paternoster & Pogarsky, 2009). Decision-making theory can be traced back to work by Ward Edwards in 1954, who proposed that there are five sections to decision-making: a) the theory of riskless choices, b) the application of the theory of riskless choices, c) the theory of risky choices, d) transitivity in decision making, and e) the theory of games and of statistical decision functions. In this study, it is proposed that top management make choices in their daily interactions within the organisation that may seem quick. However, on inspection, these choices are informed by a considered mind set.

Choice making by top management regarding their selection of strategising practices is an automatic mental calculation that would include consideration of their thinking styles, the situation, the environment realities, and the desired outcome (Spiller,

2012:62, Nuntamanop *et al.*, 2013:251). The study suggests that choice making depends on both the business circumstances, the top management thinking styles, and the time required to make the choice.

As strategists, top managers are required to be highly attuned to the environment in order to read the signs that point to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats before they make their choices (Spiller, 2012:62). The study did show that top management are required to learn and adapt to their unfolding reality. The choice making in which top management engage is fundamentally influenced by time. The study proposes that choices made under normal, non-pressurised circumstances are different from those made when there is time pressure, for example, when there is a crisis.

#### **2.4.7.1 Time consideration in choice-making**

Considering that ‘time’ had an impact on thinking, the next section focuses on time. Time, in this instance, refers to both periodic time (past, present and future) as well as the sense of urgency (Fortunato & Furey, 2012:850).

Table 2.8 provides more detail on Fortunato and Furey’s (2012:850) time perspective in thinking.

**Table 2.8: Past, present and future thinking time perspectives**

<b>TIME PERSPECTIVE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Past thinking</b>	The past thinking perspective minimises the risk associated with choice making of a specific strategising practice by drawing on past knowledge and successful past experiences.
<b>Present thinking</b>	With present thinking, the probability of obtaining the desired choice making outcome can be maximised by structuring and controlling the environment efficiently, in real time.
<b>Future thinking</b>	With the future perspective of thinking, the ability to anticipate the ever-changing environmental conditions requires flexibility. The thinker would need to be adaptable to the environment and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves as the event occurs.

Source: Adapted from Fortunato and Furey (2012:850)

Top management engage in the choice making of various strategising practices and are influenced by the time perspective of their thinking (Fortunato & Furey, 2012:850). More than the time perspective’s impact on choice making, there is also the concept

of valuable alternatives, or non-linear options, that influence what choice making takes place. Alternatives options are discussed in the next section.

#### **2.4.8 Valuable alternatives to thinking styles**

Past studies by researchers such as Vance, Groves, Yongsun, and Kindler (2007:167), competed with, and were at times, in direct contradiction with others in their presentation of valuable alternatives to 'rational and logical thinking' for improving top management choice making. For example, there is the multifaceted construct of thinking styles based on two primary dimensions: linear thinking that covers rationality, logic, analytic thinking, and non-linear thinking that covers intuition, insight, creativity (Vance *et al.*, 2007:167).

Other humanistic aspects, such as intuition and emotional intelligence, as well as non-rational and non-logical options, are excluded (Murphy, 2006). However, Zadeh and Angazi (2016:93) assert that there is a relationship between 'humanistic leadership styles' and how top management engage with choice making.

Other researchers contended that holistic and integrative thinking modes contribute positively to choice making by offering alternatives that may be neither rational nor logical (Önen, 2015).

### **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The literature chapter provided a critical multi-disciplinary review of strategising practices (a business sciences variable focused on strategy) and discussed how top management's thinking styles (a human sciences variable focused on cognition) ultimately influenced choice making. The research conducted by Balogun *et al.* (2013:15) and Blasco (2012:368) was discussed to enable an understanding of socialisation practices and to allow implications to be drawn from the discussion (Floris, 2014:61). The contributions made by Murphy (2006), Balogun *et al.* (2013), Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2013), and the research of Seidl and Whittington (2014) were reviewed. Understanding their constructs and theories about the relationship between strategising practices and thinking could facilitate the acquisition of thinking skills as required by top management, and could also be examined empirically (Murphy, 2006:14; Goldman *et al.*, 2015:157). The various thinking styles, such as the cognitive

continuum theory and mental self-government that lead to choice- making (Allinson & Hayes, 2012:3) were reviewed in detail.

The current research study proposed using the application of the Sternberg and Wagner (1992) TSI as the best option to answer the research questions. The cognitive continuum section showed that there was a task element to thinking that required top management to improve and to become more adaptive (Nuntamanop *et al.*, 2013:247). The theory of mental self-government was also examined. The examination showed that there were certain patterns of thinking that dominated in organisations (Betoret & Artiga, 2014:89). The literature review highlighted that mental agility in strategising is a skill that requires improvement and advancement.

In the next chapter, the focus is on 'context'. The researcher embeds strategising practices as a component of practice theory. The theoretical link is necessary as it establishes a solid foundation to the literature review that is later used in the methodology section as another source of data. The researcher also covers the context of the retail industry and the retail organisation.



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## CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT PRACTICES, SA RETAIL INDUSTRY AND THE RETAIL ORGANISATION

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In an effort to build up to a single background, this chapter sets out the ‘context’ of the study in three different but overlapping areas. The three overlapping areas are: a) the practice theory context on which the research units of observation of strategising practices are based, b) the South African retail industry context in which the retail organisation (an illustrative example) is situated, and c) the organisational context from which the population (unit of analysis) of top management is derived. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to provide a broader view of the contextual background of how these three areas lead to the study units of observation, namely, strategising practices and thinking styles.

Figure 3.1 shows the flow of topics, starting with background information on practice theory and ending with the setting of the organisational context.



**Figure 3.1: Structure – Chapter 3**

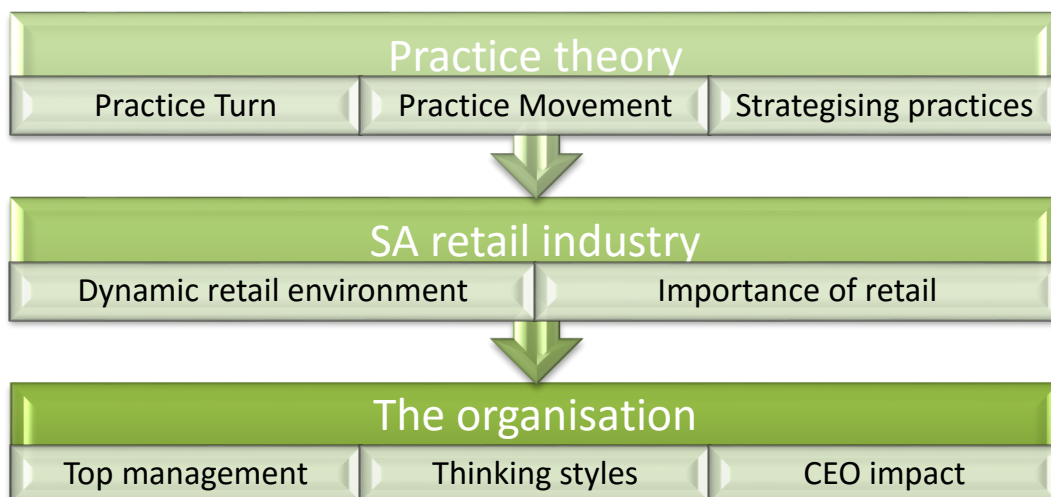
*“The frame, the definition, is a type of context. Moreover, context ... determines the meaning of things. There is no such thing as the view from nowhere, or from everywhere for that matter. Our point of view biases our observation, consciously and unconsciously. You cannot understand the view without the point of view.”* (Noam Shpancer, *The Good Psychologist*, 2010.)

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

The quote above highlights the setting of the context as important in the sequencing of research in order to ‘frame’ where the study is set. The study of top management strategising practices and their thinking styles is set within the practice theory. Researchers such as Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009:17) use the S-as-P perspective as a point of view to examine the daily use of strategising practices, espouse this.

Figure 3.2 is a demonstration of how each of the overlapping areas makes up the background to this study. The sub-headings show which areas were drawn out of that particular context.

In Figure 3.2, the three contextual areas are shown and the key units of observation are placed within context eventually applied in this study.



**Figure 3.2: Context practice theory, SA retail industry and the organisation**

The following section introduces the first element, the practice theory, from which the study's first unit of observation of strategising practice originates.

### 3.2 INTRODUCTION TO PRACTICE THEORY CONTEXT

*“The ... most [commonly] used [strategising] practices involved reactions to crises. [Top management] ... use... [Strategising] practices that employ long time horizons and [that] make investments in ... the development... [of all the management structures and employee levels] ... and... [that make investments in] ... organisational learning” (Goldman, 2015:36).*

While practice theory could be traced far back into history, for this study, significant references are based on the works by Bourdieu (1972) referenced by Bourdieu and Nice (1977) (French versions and the English translations of 1977). Practice theory comes into sharp focus when there is a crisis. Sharp focus affects the long time horizon of how practices are employed as implied in the above quote. Empirical research in strategy management literature is required to study how practice theory is shaped by the environment realities (Goldman, 2015:36). When the above quote is further examined, it implies that practice theory in organisations drives strategy focus at all management levels to enable strategic operations and learning. The study suggests that the ‘enabling’ process of practices can be examined by using empirical research, much like the opening quote.

Practice theory is not static in nature. It has been shown in other research, as well as in numerous articles, and academic business studies and textbooks that it is constantly undergoing change and an evolution in theory formulation (Bromiley & Rau, 2014:11). Practice evolution has allowed other research to examine closely various practice-related ‘activities’ inside different organisations (Bromiley & Rau, 2014:11). In this study, reference is made to these ‘activities’ as strategising practices that enable top management to attain the overall strategy.

Practice theory indicates various developments that start with the planning, forming and controlling of strategy, up to the implementation and measuring of strategy. Furthermore, management control principles that are associated with the practice evolution and the associated multiple views of practice theory were later included in the general theory of practice (Bromiley & Rau, 2014:5).

Multiple views on practice theory are briefly described in the next section.

### **3.2.1 Multiple views of various practice theories**

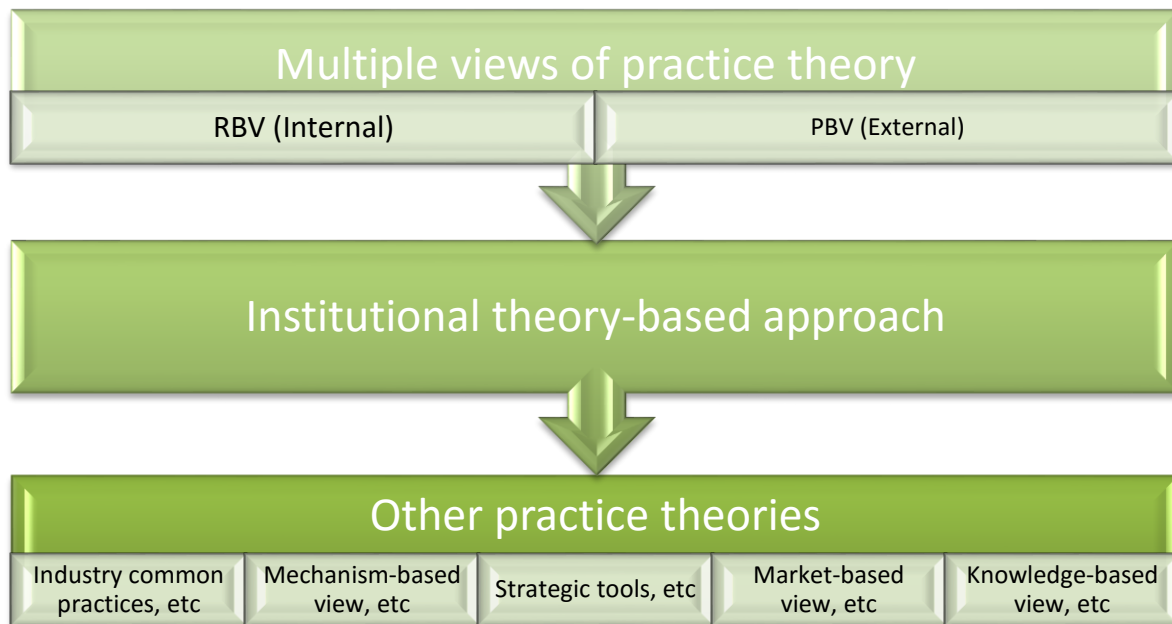
The multiple views range from strategy formulation to implementation, usually from an internal examination of the resource-based view (RBV), and this extends to the practice-based view (PBV) that looks at the external broader industry meaningful activities (Corradi, Gherardi & Verzelloni, 2010:272; Bromiley & Rau, 2014:7).

When both the RBV and PBV are considered together, they herald the evolution of the practice theory to include the institutional theory-based approach (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007:3). The institutional-based view focuses on common industry practices that are meaningful to strategising.

There is also the 'mechanism-based view', which in consideration, enables the tools of strategy, or could be seen as the internal mechanism of strategy that could be leveraged. The market-based view (MBV) is different to 'mechanism-based view' in that it is externally focused and is about advertising and promotional activities. There is also the 'knowledge-based view' (KBV) that is about key internal information and internal corporate intelligence abilities. This KBV looks at competitive advantage based on skills and important information as a differentiator of strategic activities (Corradi *et al.*, 2010:272).

Figure 3.3 is an illustration of the multiple views that flow from within practice theory. The study proposes that practice theory is essentially about reviewing the practices in the internal environment or the external environment.

In Figure 3.3, all other subsequent views are shown as feedback to either of the two environments realities, implying that the various institutional practice theories can be distilled back to either RBV or PBV. Research is required directly to link every practice theory back to this duality of practice.



**Figure 3.3: Multiple views that flow from practice theories**

The above short summary of the various practice theory views does not encompass the full body of knowledge on practice theory and strategy tools. There are more than 45 frequently used practice theory views on tools. Some are interpreted as tools while some are seen as new constructs (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2012; Bain & Company's survey, 2013).

The following section is an overview of the various practice theories found in the practice literature. A brief review of these theories is necessary, as they are the basis from which the interviews schedule questions were compiled (Appendix G).

### **3.3 PRACTICE TURN AND PRACTICE MOVEMENT CONTEXT**

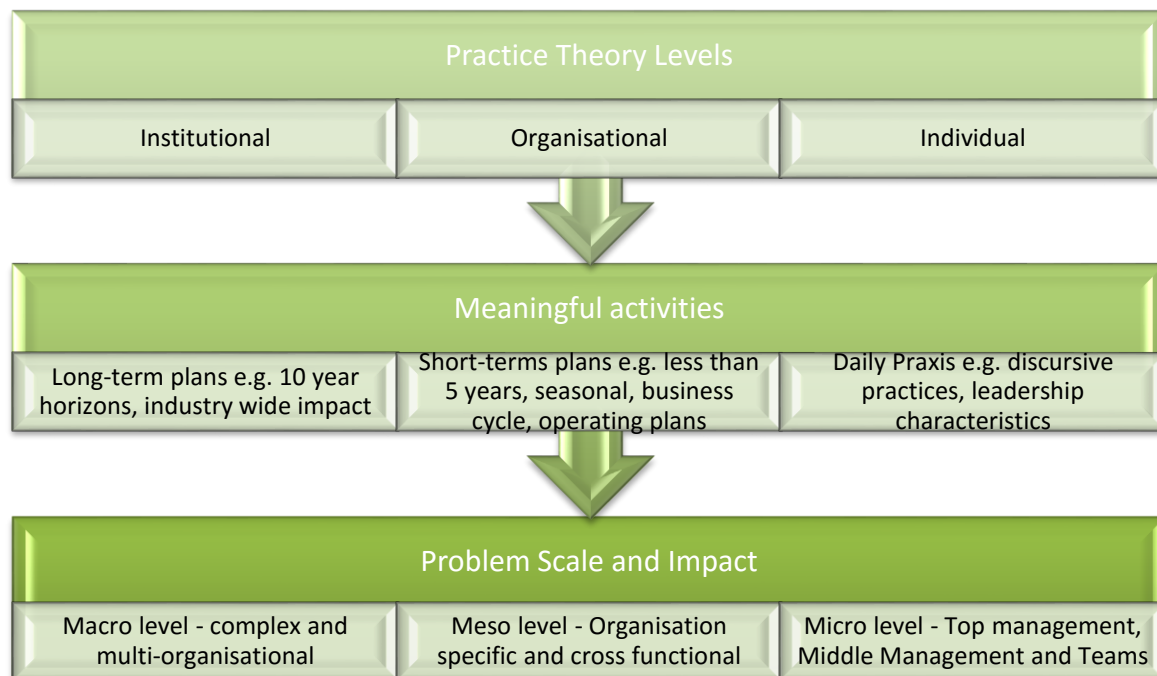
Practice theory has evolved through a process termed the 'practice turn'. Researchers into practice theory also use the term 'practice movement' to denote this evolution in practice theory. An investigation of the practice turn is necessary to support the understanding of the research methodology and the design of this study's interviews schedule as described in Chapter 4. Practice movement is an attempt to explain how macro-level organisational practices by management are influenced through the characteristics of organisational micro-level practices (Bromiley & Rau, 2014:7).

The practice turn has direct links to both the RBV and the PBV (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007:3). The 'turn' in practice theory included the seminal works of Foucault (1980),

de Certeau (1984), Bourdieu (1990), Fairclough (2003), and Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2007). Their insights showed that top management chose specific daily meaningful activities to enable strategy (or praxis) and they linked the macro-level with the micro- as a direct application of practice theory (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:3). These theories were used as background information and are briefly described in the following section:

- Foucauldian theory is based on the governmentality of employees, and was explained in three management elements, namely: a) governmentality, b) positional power, and c) industry knowledge (McKinlay & Pezet, 2010:486). 'Governmentality' was Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault coined the term 'governmentality' to address the specificity of contemporary neo-liberal forms of governance (McKinlay & Pezet, 2010:486).
- Bourdieusian theory contributes to institutional theory-based studies by accounting for the genesis of new influential practices (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:921). New practices naturally develop at both the macro- and micro levels in the organisation. Bourdieusianism explores the gap that exists between the macro- and micro perspectives of these new practices as they emerge (Gomez & Bouty, 2011:921).
- Structuration is about the resource control by top managers when they use administrative processes to embed a strategy and control resources by using the administrative practices available to them (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009:41; Löwstedt, 2015:3).
- The activity theory analyses how strategic planning enables top management to deliver strategic integration across departments and in different locations, achieved through their negotiations and compromises (Jarzabkowski & Balogun, 2009:1256).
- Critical discourse analysis theory (CDA) is the use of language and the storytelling by top management as they apply their strategising practices (Fairclough, 2003; Vaara, Sorsa & Pälli, 2010: 689).
- Sense-making theory (SMT) is seen when top management focus on the role of middle management in shaping their use of the prescribed strategising practices (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011:953).
- Complexity theory is about top management working in a changing environment (Jarzabkowski, Spee & Smets, 2013:29).

In Figure 3.4, practice theory is demonstrated to have three levels to it: practices at an institutional level, organisational level and individual practices. Under each level the kind of activities associated with the praxis are listed, and lastly, the size of the impact is described.



**Figure 3.4: Practices, activities and impact**

The study adopted an S-as-P perspective, which is a viewpoint that provides a specific vantage point from which to see the data in context. The following section discusses S-as-P that is derived from the practice movement (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:23).

### 3.3.1 The Strategy-as-Practice domain perspective

Given that top management's strategising practices and their thinking styles are the focus of this study, in practice theory, the individual behaviour (praxis) is embedded in other social practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012:23).

Table 3.1 is an illustration of how an empirical focus is applied to explore the organisational practices that enable action. The column on the right shows how practices are interpreted from an S-as-P perspective. Table 3.1 is split along three levels, namely, the empirical, the structure and the process.

Each level is differentiated according to how a normal strategy process would focus or would emphasise certain areas when compared to how these are seen in the S-as-P perspective.

**Table 3.1: S-as-P and related traditions in strategy institutional research**

FOCUS	NORMAL STRATEGY PROCESS	STRATEGY-AS-PRACTICE PROCESS
<b>Empirical (Macro/Micro)</b>	Focus is on the individual, or single organisation or team level phenomena	Focus is on organisations and institutions that enable or constrain action
<b>Structure (Agency)</b>	Emphasis is on managerial agency	Emphasis is on practices as mediating between structure and agency
<b>Process (Outcome)</b>	How managerial processes contribute to the overall organisational performance	How institutionalised practices are the shapers of activity and actual outcomes of activities

Source: Adapted from Vaara and Whittington (2012:48)

The above table is one aspect of S-as-P that describes the processes followed in S-as-P by comparing them to traditional strategy processes. The other aspect of S-as-P is to define whom the S-as-P practitioners are using a typology to describe how the practitioners of S-as-P differ from each other.

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009:39) designed an S-as-P matrix, divided into nine domains, ranging from Domain 'A' to Domain 'I' – to try defining these S-as-P practitioners by the level of praxis.

In Table 3.2, each of the domains is defined by the level of praxis and the type of practitioner.



**Table 3.2: Typology of S-as-P by type of practitioner and level of praxis**

<b>LEVEL OF PRAXIS</b>	<b>A</b> Individual practitioners and micro-praxis and personal experiences	<b>D</b> Aggregate practitioners and micro-praxis as defined by position in organisation (e.g. middle or top management)	<b>G</b> Extra-organisational aggregate actors and micro-praxis as external actors (e.g. consultants)
	<b>B</b> Individual actors and meso-praxis dealing with interaction with others	<b>E</b> Aggregate practitioners and meso-praxis as compared to other similar groups, used in benchmarking	<b>H</b> Extra-organisational aggregate actors and meso-praxis (e.g. regulators)
	<b>C</b> Individual practitioners and macro-praxis dealing with institutions	<b>F</b> Aggregate practitioners and macro-praxis dealing with the institutionalisation of practices across whole industry	<b>I</b> Extra-organisational aggregate actors and macro-praxis (e.g. business schools and industry councils)
<b>TYPE OF PRACTITIONER</b>			

Source: Adapted from Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009:39)

Table 3.2 is an adaptation of this typology, categorising levels of praxis against types of practitioners along the nine possible variations. From this perspective, Domain ‘D’ applied to this study, which studied top managers as aggregate practitioners and their strategising practices as seen from the micro-praxis.

The following section details the retail industry further within the context of this study.

### **3.4 SOUTH AFRICAN RETAIL INDUSTRY CONTEXT**

The research context was the top management strategising practices and thinking styles within the ‘South African retail industry’. On the A.T. Kearney’s (2016) Global Retail Development Index, which ranked the top 30 developing countries for retail investment worldwide, South Africa’s formal retail sector was within the top five on the African continent and was ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in the world. While South Africa, at 27<sup>th</sup> position, is low on the list, it is the fact that it is recognised by being on the list that is considered in this study. The retail industry makes up a large sector in the South African economy, and with a contribution of 15%, it was the fourth largest contributor to the GDP in 2016.

In addition, 22% of the total active workforce of the country was employed in the retail industry in 2016 (Abe & Mason, 2016:192).

The industry was chosen for the study primarily because of the following reasons (Fast Moving, 2015):

- The dynamism of strategising practices prevalent in the retail industry.
- The speed of choice making within the fast moving consumer goods market, and
- The complexity of top management thinking styles required in this ever-changing environment.

### **3.4.1 South African economy compared to the global market and the USA GDP**

An econometric analysis shows a 0.89 similarity between real GDP measured for the global market and the real South African GDP during the 2000 to 2012 period (Tustin, van Aardt, Jordaan, van Tonder & Meiring, 2014:2). Interdependence between local economic performance and international growth numbers was implied by this similarity.

The South African economy can be regarded as a consumer-driven economy where consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of the GDP (Tustin *et al.*, 2014:2). The South African retail sector has been dominated by largely homegrown holding companies, mainly owing to the isolation from the international market during the apartheid period. The retail industry came into the international spotlight when South Africa received an invitation to join the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) economic group, where after it became BRICS after South Africa joined the group. The country also received exposure from hosting the 2010 Soccer World Cup as an emerging economy (Thomas White International, 2011).

Developments in the political sphere in South Africa have destabilised the economy and have given rise to a negative perception about the ability of South Africa to control the institutionalised corruption that has taken hold. More research is required in this field. As a policy implication, blanket corruption-control strategies are unlikely to succeed in South Africa owing to the different income levels and unstable political will

to fight corruption (Asongu, 2013:54). The following section further describes the key players within the South African retail industry.

### **3.4.2 Oligopolistic key players**

Retail in South Africa has been a more or less oligopolistic market with seven food companies, namely, Shoprite, Pick n Pay, Spar, Massmart, Cambridge, Woolworths and Metcash leading the market. These companies have traded under several other store names and have operated discount outlets, constituting 80% of the retail sales in the food retail segment (Businesslive online, 2017). On the contrary, the textile retail industry has been dominated by nine textile companies, namely, Truworths, The Foschini Group, Edcon Group, Ackermans, Mr Price, PEP, Cotton On, Pick n Pay Clothing and Woolworths, representing the fashion clothing segment (Businesslive online, 2017).

### **3.4.3 Industry statistics context**

Retail trade sales at constant 2012 prices grew from R625 billion in 2010 to an estimated R750 billion in 2015, with this figure at current prices reflecting an amount of R855 billion for 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2015). There are population and race dynamics to consider when reviewing the South African retail industry because of the historical imbalances and inequality. Black South Africans constitute 79.4% of the nation's population, 8.9% whites, 8.9% coloureds and 2.5% Indians and Asians with an estimated 2.5% of immigrants, based on census results (StatsSA 2011). The updated estimates are that South Africa will have over 56 million people by 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

The emerging black middle class is estimated at around three million people – which is the largest spending group in South Africa (Tustin *et al.*, 2014:11). Future studies may show that demographical dynamics are relevant, as they require different thinking and strategising practices to be considered by top management in other industries (Tustin *et al.*, 2014:11).

### **3.4.4 E-commerce and online retailing**

E-commerce and online retailing has grown substantially in South Africa. The number of South Africans with access to the internet has grown to 5.3 million, up from 4.6

million between 2009 and early 2010 (World Wide Worx, 2016). It was reported that e-commerce has reached 1% of the overall retail market in 2016 (World Wide Worx, 2016). This concludes the discussion of the formal retail market in the country; the next section discusses the informal retail market. There are opportunities to focus future research on how strategising practices apply to the development of the retail market.

### **3.4.5 Informal retail market**

President Thabo Mbeki (2010) referred to the South African informal retail market as 'the second economy', which he estimated to be equal to the formal retail market in Rand value. This informal market serves the predominantly black residential townships (Thomas White International, 2011; World Wide Worx, 2016; Tustin *et al.*, 2014:11).

The informal retail sector is composed of around 780 000 informal shops called 'spazas' and street vendors. Most of the traders are foreign nationals, displaced by political and economic unrest in their respective African countries. Some of these traders are also from India, Pakistan and China, in search of business opportunities in the informal market (Thomas White International, 2011). Conservative estimates put the revenues of this market at around R32 billion per annum (Tustin *et al.*, 2014:11; Statistics South Africa, 2015; World Wide Worx, 2016).

When top management scan the environment, they would consider the missed opportunities represented by the informal market. They would also consider the following environmental realities as high risks factors.

### **3.4.6 Risks to be considered by top management**

The South African retail market faces a number of risks, which include among others, increased strike action, an electricity supply shortfall, a budget deficit and a trade deficit, and high inflation (6.1%) (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Other risks are international rating agency downgrades that affect the country's ability to repay its loans, extreme political corruption at State institutions, social instability, such as service delivery failures and high unemployment levels (31%) (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

Further risks include the poorly negotiated land redistribution deals, the threat of nationalisation of the reserve bank, mines and banks (Statistics South Africa, 2015). There are also skills shortage issues, failing infrastructure and poorly managed government strategic long-term plans, and extreme weather (droughts, fires and floods) affecting food security and water supply (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

In general, retail management needs to reflect on these risks as having a broad and long-range impact on their organisations and impact on their abilities to strategise and impact on their thinking styles required to rise to meet these risks (Tustin *et al.*, 2014:21). In this study, top management at the retail organisation needed to take note of the risk factors, and their macro-impact on their strategising practices and plans over and above their own internal challenges.

### **3.4.7 Other retail industry related studies**

A number of research studies have been undertaken within the South African retail industry. However, none of them were focused on either strategising practices or thinking styles. For example, Dakora, Bytheway and Slabbert (2014:218) conducted a study on strategic options for the expansion of South African retail organisations into the rest of Africa.

Chidozie, Peter and Akande (2014) have studied the encroachment of foreign megastores into the South African market. Another study examined how supermarket expansion makes food accessible to previously excluded markets (Battersby & Peyton, 2014). There was little reference in these studies to strategising practices or thinking styles. Some research looked at tactical planning within the retail industry (Beneke, 2010). There was no reference to the link between strategising practices and thinking styles.

All these topics, ranging from the economic correlation, oligopolistic players, industry statistics, industry risk, and other-related studies, have set the context for the retail industry within which this study was conducted.

The following section narrows the study down to the retail organisation and the reasons for the choice of this organisation.

### **3.5 THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT**

The retail organisation was chosen owing to it being regarded as one of the top five largest and most successful retailers in South Africa, according to the ranking by Fast Moving (2015). In addition, this organisation was selected owing to the strategising practices being applied in a concentrated manner inside the organisation in a short period, reflecting the short tenure of each of the five CEOs during the limited time span of 15 years. In this study, it is shown that the retail organisation also implemented a successful brand redesign, which tested and challenged the understanding of existing strategising practices.

Table 3.3 is a presentation of the four other reasons why this specific retail organisation was selected for the study.

**Table 3.3: Four reasons for choice of retail organisation**

REASON FOR CHOICE	REASONING
<b>Size</b> <p>The retail industry was made up of a few large companies (Tustin <i>et al.</i>, 2014:11). This retail organisation was not only a large corporation within the industry but had a sizable market share of the industry.</p>	<p>The size of market share was relevant, as it signified the importance of the organisation in the market (Tustin <i>et al.</i>, 2014:11). This was especially relevant when it came to the organisation's role in setting trends and showing industry leadership in innovation.</p>
<b>Change</b> <p>The organisation has had a turnover of five CEOs in the last 15 years, and each has had a unique influence on the top management thinking and strategising practices. It is unusual to have such a high turnover of CEOs in such a short period.</p>	<p>A close examination of top management <i>habitus</i> showed that this was a rich source of data (Flyvbjerg, 2006:3). Each of the CEOs played a pivotal role in how the retail organisation selected its strategising practices and applied its thinking styles. There are reasons why the tenure of each CEO was short: 1) some CEOs left to pursue other opportunities elsewhere, 2) others were terminated, 3) while others were merely caretakers for short periods, and 4) others did not fit with the culture of the organisation.</p>
<b>Growth</b> <p>Most retailers were busy with expansion into the greater African markets and with emerging market penetration (Tustin <i>et al.</i>, 2014:11). The retail organisation was also engaged in key projects such as: a) supply chain, as distribution of stock is critical to retailers, b) centralisation of shared resources in the different divisions and c) succession planning and organisational restructuring.</p>	<p>Their growth plans mean that the organisation was not stagnant and that they were responding to market demands. These expansion plans also meant that the top management were applying their thinking strategically to the changing business environment realities.</p>
<b>Investment</b> <p>Overseas investors were looking at the South African retail market (Tustin <i>et al.</i>, 2014:11). The retail organisation was an investment opportunity as an entry into the African retail market.</p>	<p>Acquisitions and mergers were driven by globalisation, which indicated that different thinking styles were required for top management involved in multi-national enterprises.</p>

The elements of thinking and strategising practices were in full view at the retail organisation, as the top management navigated the next phase of the organisational business cycle.

### **3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the researcher provided an introduction to practice theory. This was followed by a short review of some the multiple views of various practice theories. The terms practice turn and the practice movement were placed in context to further show the link to how practice theory has evolved. The relevance of the South African retail industry to the study was covered in detail. Moreover, this led to a discussion of the retail organisation where the top management's relevance to this study was based. The chapter discussed the context from which the research units of observation originated.

The following chapter is the research design and methodology chapter, where the previous three chapters' key points of this study are actualised.

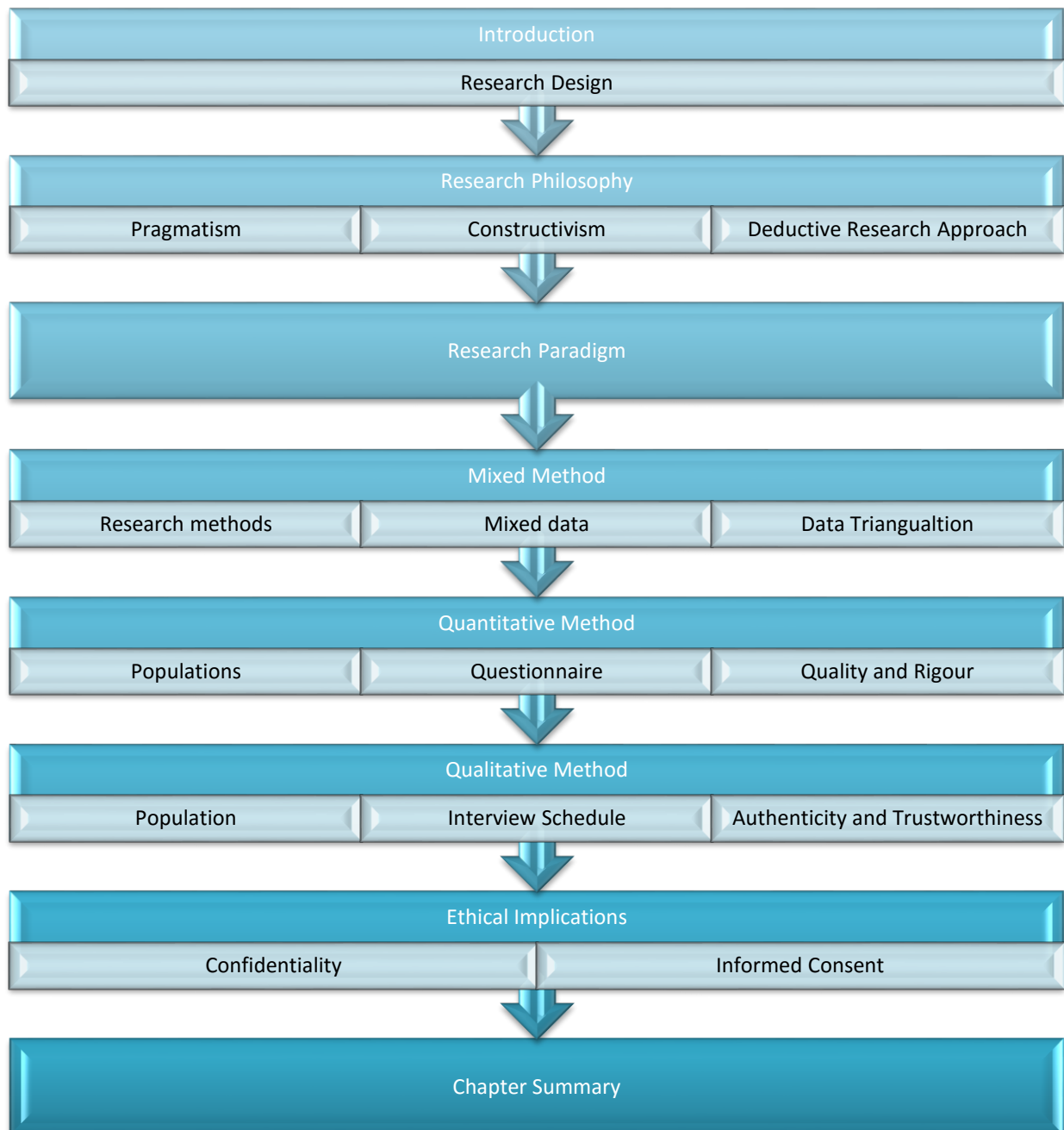


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## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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Figure 4.1 shows the flow of topics in this methodology chapter. The key elements of the sub-sections are also captured in this figure.



**Figure 4.1: Structure – Chapter 4**

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the research design and methodology employed in the study, including a discussion on the research paradigm. Mixed data was collected in two different sections, which were non-sequential and allowed data to be collected concurrently. The different sections were used to triangulate the data. The data analysis that follows covers the techniques associated with each section. There is a short discussion of the population of the study. The ethics of the study are discussed before a short summary concludes the chapter.

The systematic approach applied in this study is summarised in Table 4.1, which provides an overview of the methods that were employed concurrently as well as the response generated by both methods employed.

**Table 4.1: Systematic approach to the study**

METHOD	QUANTITATIVE METHOD	QUALITATIVE METHOD
<b>Material</b>	Online survey	Hardcopies interviews
<b>Instrument</b>	Questionnaire	Interview Schedule
<b>Sample</b>	79 respondents	33 participants
<b>No. of items</b>	104 questions	11 Questions
<b>Theory</b>	Based on MSG and TSI	Based on practice theory
<b>Tool</b>	SPSS (Version 24)	Atlas.ti (Version 7.5.15)
<b>Data format</b>	Numeric data	Textual data
<b>Analysis</b>	Statistical analysis	The classification: categorisation of data into themes relevant to the study

## 4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is the framework that guides the research activity, and allows the researcher to make a connection between the research problem presented in Chapter 1, and the relevant data collected from the literature review in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The research design is the general plan to answer the research questions, covering the philosophy, the research approach, the paradigm applied, the methodology, the

data collection and analysis, quality and rigour and closes with the ethical implications applicable to the study.

## **4.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

A pragmatic, constructivist research philosophy underpins this study. Pragmatism and constructivism are discussed in this section as the two factors related to the research philosophy.

### **4.3.1 Pragmatism as a research philosophy**

The pragmatic tradition owes some of its development to John Dewey and William James in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:133). They were in search of a practical method to combine both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in a study. According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), in pragmatism, the research question is the important determinant of the:

- ontology (i.e. the nature of reality in attempting to understand the meaning of social phenomena as entities external to individuals);
- epistemology (i.e. the acceptable knowledge in a field of study); and
- axiology (i.e. the judgement about the researcher's values system during research).

The existing knowledge on thinking styles is generally accepted in this study (epistemology) whereas the knowledge on strategising practices has been derived from various literature sources and compiled into a specific list. Therefore, focus was on what was pragmatically useful to answer the research question. Epistemologically, it is suggested that the researcher is a pragmatist who believes in “knowing through making”. It could be said that pragmatism recognises the constructive and indispensable roles that researchers play in the research process (Deng & Ji, 2018:7).

Pragmatists are driven by the problems that people face and want to find out ‘what works’ by applying a practical approach, integrating different perspectives to help collect and interpret data, preferably using both qualitative and quantitative methods in a mixed-method study (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:133). As post-positivism could not effectively bridge the differences between positivism and interpretivism, pragmatists

suggested applying these contrasting philosophies in one study (Rust & Hughes, 2017).

**Criticism:** There is strong criticism of pragmatism because positivism and interpretivism are seen as contrasting ideologies. The combination of positivism and interpretivism in one study is deemed incompatible by virtue of their dualisms, such as the objectivity versus subjectivity, the fixed categories versus emergent categories, the outsider's perspective versus the personal perspective, the static reality versus a fluid reality, and the explanation versus the understanding (Le Grange, 2018).

In contrast to this criticism, there is equal strong support that both positivism and interpretivism can be applied together in a singular pragmatic research. The application of pragmatism works in this study mainly because of the mixed methodology and multiple data sources require a practical approach to collecting and assessing the mixed data. This study applies a strategy-as-practice perspective, pragmatism as a philosophical choice to combine positivism and interpretivism. This combined application can lead to a greater appreciation of what works in practice (Mitchell, 2018:103) and what works in the real day-to-day engagement of top management within their environmental realities.

Furthermore, Corradi *et al.* (2010:270) argue that every organisational context could be studied by adopting a 'pragmatic view' able to explore the dimension of knowledge 'localised, embedded and invested in day-to-day practices'. Hansen (2011:771) showed that the real question to be asked a pragmatist is - what is going on in the organisations and what can actually and practically explain it? McKinlay and Pezet (2008:6) conclude that pragmatism avoids the distractions of conventional academic debate, as if it were static impeding the development of any theory.

Lastly, Suominen and Mantere (2010:226) propose that pragmatism considers strategy (what is actually the 'action' part of strategising *per se*) as part of the daily activities of the organisation, where there is significance of tangibility and practicality as a means of understanding and adopting a particular strategy.

In summary, it is proposed that pragmatism is not only a third way. It requires working within both the positivist (theory-driven observable research, which is generalisable but highly structured) and interpretivist (research in search of meaning through mainly qualitative subjective studies with focuses on details of the situation) to apply a more

practical approach to a study (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:119). This pragmatism discussion leads into the constructivist research philosophy covered in the following section.

#### **4.3.2 Constructivist research philosophy**

Constructivism is closely associated with the hermeneutics view (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011:305), in that the actions of top management are specifically examined to see how they shape the strategising practice in line with the reality of the organisation. Saunders *et al.* (2009:123) suggest that constructivism is appropriate to use in situations where there are multiple realities to be understood, as the constructivist perspective is considered to be an integrated perspective and appropriate to use in mixed-methods research.

As a philosophy, constructivism is appropriate to answer the research questions in detail. This philosophy involves the process of theory generation, for example, concerning top management's choice of strategising practices as informed by their thinking styles. This allows for the creation of an understanding of how top management uses practice theory and applies thinking styles theory to align with the various societal constructs and various other approaches taken to create the meaning behind practice theories (Creswell, 2003:6 & 2009:67; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011:305).

Constructivism also allowed the various practice theories to be tested during the interviews. The empirical evidence gathered from the literature review in Chapter 2, the data collected during questionnaires, and interviews enabled top management strategising practices to be viewed in relation to thinking styles (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011:305; Sanders *et al.*, 2009:124). This means that top management's experiences and strategising practices could also be empirically researched and the outcome thereof contrasted to practice theory, which aligns with the deductive approach. The deductive approach was deemed correct for this study because it drives a specific focus on the reasoning applied to test rigorously scientific theory.

For this study, the combination of pragmatic-constructivist research philosophy created an opportunity to construct a profile of top management engaged in their daily reality as strategist, busy with strategising, while using their thinking styles to select the requisite strategising practices to achieve organisational goals. This pragmatic-

constructivist combination provided rich data to be reviewed and examined for any possible relationships and meaning, which was required in attempt to answering the research questions and addressing the research objectives.

### **4.3.3 Deductive research approach**

The deductive approach was deemed suitable to answer the research questions and it aligns with how constructivism works. The application of the deductive approach addresses matters with the reasoning moving from the general-to-the-specific, for example, moving from the macro-strategy to the micro-practices (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The quantitative methodology also uses deductive reasoning, moving from the general view to a specific point of view (Teddlie & Tashakori, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The view from general-to-the-specific aligned with this study, as general theory on practices theory was narrowed down to the identified specific strategising practices as described in Chapter 2.

Applying constructivism as a philosophy and using the deductive approach, supported by an inquiry strategy, added a descriptive element to the study that allowed for the framing of the research paradigm associated with this study.

## **4.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

In order to understand research paradigms, Kuhn (1962), Guba and Lincoln (1990) and Saunders *et al* (2009) definitions are reviewed in the light of this study.

### **4.4.1 What is a research paradigm?**

Research paradigm is defined as the basic belief system about the nature of the world or worldview that guides a research, not only in the choices of the methodology but guides the ontology (realism) and the epistemology (objectivism) fundamentals of the research (Guba & Lincoln 1990; Saunders *et al.*, 2009:118).

Kuhn (1962) had further simplified the definition of paradigms to, “...*the common agreement amongst researchers about how problems should be understood and addressed*”.

Guba and Lincoln (1990) suggest that research paradigms are human constructions reliant on utility and can be characterised by posing several questions below under the

headings of ontology, epistemology, theory, methodology, methods and sources. After each of these questions, a pragmatic point of view that was applied for this study is presented:

### **Ontology**

#### **What is the nature of reality?**

In this study, what is the reality of strategising practices?  
What is the reality around thinking styles? Guba (1990)  
*From a pragmatic point of view – reality is viewed as negotiable, debatable and open to interpretation for its usefulness in new unpredictable situations.*

### **Epistemology**

#### **How do we know about this reality?**

In this study, how do we know things about top management strategising practices in business management? How do we know about the psychology of thinking styles? How strategic practices and strategic thinking really is?  
*From a pragmatic point of view – the act of finding out creates meaning. While identifying ‘change’ opportunities becomes the underlining aim. Therefore, practically, the best methods are the ones that solve the research problem.*

### **Theory**

#### **Which approach is to be used to uncover knowledge?**

What approach is aligned to practice theory and can be use to get knowledge and insights about top management strategising practices? What approach, using the Thinking Styles Inventory, can be used to get knowledge about top management thinking styles?  
*From a pragmatic point of view – this is research through design.*

**Methodology****How do we go about finding out about practices in reality at the case organisation?**

How do we identify which thinking styles are applied in the daily strategising activities at the case organisation?

*From a pragmatic point of view – mixed methods could apply, Design based research could apply or Action research could apply. However, in this study mixed methods were applied.*

**Methods****What techniques can be used to find knowledge?**

What tools can be used in this study to acquire data and uncover knowledge? What survey instruments are right? What type of interviews were appropriate?

*Practically – a combination sampling, questionnaires application, qualitative interviews, statistical analysis and theme identification was done.*

**Sources****What data was collected?**

Was it Qualitative (textual data), or Quantitative (numeric data)?

*Pragmatically - mixed data sources were used.*

It is notable that Kuhn (1962) asserts that when ‘paradigms’ change, there are usually significant shifts in the criteria determining the legitimacy both of the research question and research objectives. In this study, a research paradigm was set on the assumptions about the actual practical applications of the strategising practices (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011:299; Salkind, 2012:11), with it being one of the study’s units of observation. For example, the paradigm indicated a shared understanding of top management applying practices within their environmental realities. It is also a way of examining social phenomena from which an understanding of this phenomenon can be attained (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:118). This study attempted to provide various explanations. For example, a universal view of practices was formed based on the literature review and by grouping strategies under similarly themed practice theories (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).



The deductive approach is supported by applying the inquiry strategy, especially during the qualitative phases of the research. The inquiry strategy that informed a subsection of the deductive approach is discussed in the next section.

## **4.5 MIXED METHOD INQUIRY STRATEGY**

Barrow (2006:265) posits that from the deductive approach comes the inquiry strategy as a process of seeking the truth, uncovering information, or establishing knowledge through investigation, or research, or questioning, or query, and it is identified by qualitative research. An inquiry strategy was traced back to John Dewey's work in 1910, where he proposed that with inquiry strategy, there should be new knowledge uncovered, if not, the inquiry should have yielded a greater understanding of factors that are involved in the solution (Barrow, 2006:265). Inquiry strategy has two types associated with it, namely, a) to grow the body of knowledge, or b) to invent new conceptual structures that revolutionise science (Barrow, 2006:265).

In this study, top management were asked 'how / what' questions in order to seek the truth about their use of strategising practices and their thinking styles. A clearer picture was formulated by using inquiry strategy to enable an understanding of top management's reasoning processes. In other words, what was the reasoning process that top management underwent when they engaged their thinking styles, and as a result, how did they chose their specific strategising practices.

Mixed methods are aligned with the mixed data sources used in this research. The multiple sources of data had both textual and numeric data, which required different instruments to be used in the analysis. Therefore, the mixed data aligned with both the qualitative stage and the quantitative stage. This resulted in deep data that could be analysed and interpreted in a manner that addresses the research question and the research objectives.

The selection of the research methods formed part of the approach and is discussed in the next section.

### **4.5.1 Research methods**

Research methods have the following three dimensions that characterise non-experimental research methods (Salkind, 2012:11), namely:

- the nature of the question being asked, for example, the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ questions asked during the interviews;
- the method used to answer the research questions, which in this study, required mixed data; and,
- the degree of precision the method brings to answering the research questions. For this study, there were multiple sources of data to corroborate findings and to allow for triangulation of the data.

The three parts of the approach made up the research framework associated with the research purpose. Accurate profiling of top management in their choice making of strategising practices was done in the data analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In this study, the descriptive research framework consisted of three interrelated parts that linked the data in a logical manner.

The mixed-method approach was applied in the study to align with the multiple sources of mixed data that was generated, as referenced in Chapter 1. The following section explains the terms mixed data and the mixed-method approach in detail.

#### **4.5.2 Mixed data sources**

The study obtained data from mixed data sources. This aligned with the mixed-method approach that simultaneously includes elements that are non-sequential, such as the instrument applications (Creswell, 2003:13; Creswell 2009:67). There were parts of the study that were conducted concurrently.

The research methods were matched to the research questions, as the online questionnaire was an efficient survey to get 79 respondents to answer 104 questions for RQ1 in order to collect the quantitative data in the allocated time. An interview schedule was equally efficient research method to get 33 participants to narrate their personal strategising experiences and reflect on their thinking styles while using 11 questions formulated from the literature review on practice theory. Therefore, each data source could be used to corroborate the other source and directly address the research questions.

### **4.5.3 Data triangulation**

Data triangulation was used as a strategy to ensure quality by reviewing multiple sources of data typically derived through different data collection (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:146; Mantere, 2008:294). Therefore, the alignment of the data was done through triangulation. In this study, triangulation was achieved through three main data sources, namely, 1) literature from S-as-P, strategising practice and thinking style theories, 2) quantitative data derived from an online survey, and 3) qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews.

In the next section the research methodology, associated with the quantitative data is discussed in detailed.

## 4.6 QUANTITATIVE METHOD

The following section details the quantitative methodology that was applied in the study. Table 4.2 presents an extension of Table 4.1 by looking at the anomaly.

Table 4.2: Quantitative method - questionnaire anomaly

RESEARCH QUESTIONS		RQ1: WHAT THINKING STYLES OF TOP MANAGERS AT THE CASE ORGANISATION ARE COMMONLY USED?
Anomaly		<b>Question B9:</b> The respondents were asked to identify which strategising practices they commonly used. There was a list provided for the respondents from which to make their selection.

### 4.6.1 Quantitative: Research population

A sample was derived from the targeted 133 top managers in the retail organisation under investigation. A 5% margin of error was anticipated, with 80% confidence level, and a distribution of 50% (Israel, 2013:3). The eventual sample size was 79 respondents in the study.

Table 4.3 describes the systematic process that was followed in recruiting the respondents to participate in completing the questionnaire.

**Table 4.3: Recruitment of both the respondents and participants**

<b>Step 1</b>	The office of the Human Resource group executive granted permission for the study to be conducted and for the respondents to be engaged.
<b>Step 2</b>	A copy of the permission letter from the director was attached as an appendix and was used to gain access to the respondents' schedules.
<b>Step 3</b>	A copy of the informed consent letter that disclosed the study details and the importance of the study was attached, and was issued to the participants ahead of securing a time for interviews.
<b>Step 4</b>	The researcher sourced the contact details of each of the respondents from the human resource department.
<b>Step 5</b>	As top management tend to have assistants, these secretaries were approached to gain access to the diaries of the respondents.
<b>Step 6</b>	The permission letter and the informed consent letter were sent to the respondents ahead of scheduling an appointment.
<b>Step 7</b>	The Johannesburg and Pretoria-based respondents were approached first owing to the convenience of their proximity to the researcher, and then the Cape Town and KwaZulu-Natal-based respondents were seen last.

#### **4.6.2 Quantitative: Sampling strategies**

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling strategy where individuals do not have an independent and equal chance of being selected (Salkind, 2012:95). Convenience sampling was used because the audience at the retail organisation's head office was a captive audience situated in centralised areas.

Purposive sampling was applied as it relied on the judgment of the researcher to select the members of top management to be studied. This reduced the chances of getting a representative sample because the researcher could exclude certain individuals who were negative towards the study. This is an example of 'selection / participant bias, which was mitigated by using triangulation of multiple sources of data. Furthermore, these reluctant individuals were asked to nominate a colleague at the same level who could possibly replace them.

The focus of the purposive sampling process was on the characteristics of the target population (Salkind, 2012:96). The inclusion and exclusion criteria are discussed in Table 4.4. Characteristics collected from the data were later used in the study to build a top management profile and an organisational profile.

#### **4.6.3 Quantitative: Pilot study**

A retired director of the retail organisation was engaged to test the time it would take to complete the questionnaire. Four other independent people, external to the population, were engaged to time-test the questionnaire. The piloted time to complete the online questionnaire (Lime survey website, adapted for the university) originally ran to over 40 minutes. Adjustments were made to the flow of the questionnaire to improve completion time.

#### **4.6.4 Quantitative: Demographic Data**

The online questionnaire (entered on the Lime survey, adapted for the university use) had a preceding Section 'B' that contained demographical questions of the respondents. Some of the information collected aligned with the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the respondents, as referred to in in Table 4.4. Additional information was used to help shape the background differences between the various members of top management (Appendix G).

In the following section, the questionnaire respondents of the study are discussed in detail.

#### **4.6.5 Quantitative: Questionnaire Respondents**

The study was focused on top management at the retail organisation. The study had to contend with time constraints and the availability of certain members of top management.

Table 4.4 contains the inclusion and exclusion criteria that were used to group and sift through the questionnaire respondents.

**Table 4.4: Respondents and participants inclusion criteria**

<b>RESPONDENTS AND PARTICIPANTS</b>	<p><b>Respondents and Participants were included if:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They are managers graded category C (regional), or B (divisional director and general managers) and A (group executive) only.</li> <li>▪ They are appointed as top management by the retail organisation.</li> <li>▪ They work with developing strategy.</li> <li>▪ They ensure strategy implementation.</li> <li>▪ They manage teams of middle management.</li> </ul> <p><b>Respondents and Participants were excluded if they were:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Newly appointed top managers from outside the organisation, as they would not be able to reflect on the impact of the various CEO who have headed up the top management team.</li> </ul>
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#### 4.6.6 Quantitative: Data collection

Data were collected from an online questionnaire as quantitative data, and the questionnaire itself was based on the TSI. Table 4.5 lists the steps taken during instrument administration, as well as the steps taken during the data collection from the questionnaire. The questionnaire instrument formed the basis of the research and was administered electronically.

**Table 4.5: Questionnaire - Instrument administration**

<b>STEP 1</b>	<p>The link to the online instrument (lime survey website, adapted for the institution) was emailed to each respondent with a short explanation of the research purpose.</p> <p>Attached in the email was the informed consent letter and permission letter.</p>
<b>STEP 2</b>	<p>Respondents filled out the electronic instrument. Some respondents requested one-on-one meetings to engage fully the researcher before completing the questionnaire.</p>
<b>STEP 3</b>	<p>The electronically filled questionnaire was uploaded and secured for assessment.</p> <p>The quality of the completion was checked with each response. The check included if all the questions were answered in full or if the respondents made any additional notes.</p>
<b>STEP 4</b>	<p>The respondents' anonymity was ensured by not capturing their names or details.</p>
<b>STEP 5</b>	<p>Data were kept securely in the researcher's locked office for later analysis.</p>
<b>STEP 6</b>	<p>The last step was securing more time with the executive respondents who were willing to participate by giving more feedback relevant to the other research methods of the study.</p>

#### **4.6.6.1 Quantitative: Online questionnaire**

The questionnaire was based on Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) TSI instrument. The TSI consists of 104 statements, with eight items for each of the 13 subscales. Both the questionnaire instrument and classification are attached as appendices (Appendix D and E).

For each item on the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rate themselves on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. The '1' rating was a reflection that the statement did not describe the way they would normally carry out tasks at all. The '7' reflected that the statement characterised the way that they would normally carry out tasks 'extremely well'.

#### **4.6.7 Quantitative: Data analysis**

The data analysis procedures are presented in this section. The raw data from the questionnaires was captured on a 7-point Likert scale using the IBM quantitative statistical platform of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 24). The primary data analysis programme made use of data dynamics, patterns and relationships to determine the relationships in the questionnaire. IBM SPSS is a software program that provides logically batched statistical reports.

There were a number of analyses run on the data. Table 4.6 details the various analyses run on the data collected from the quantitative stage. The order in which they are listed is based on the order in which they appear in the text and is of no particular importance.

**Table 4.6: Specific analyses relevant to the study**

Specific analysis	Reason	How
<b>FREQUENCY TESTS</b>	To differentiate between high scores and low scores, e.g. Table 5.3	Applied mostly in showing which strategising practices were most commonly selected
<b>CROSS TABULATION</b>	To compare two sets of lists, e.g. Table 5.7	Applied in looking for underlying relations between two lists of units of observation.
<b>CRONBACH ALPHA</b>	To establish levels of reliability, this statistic provides an indication of the average	Applied in test the TSI instrument's reliability, checking for values ranging from 0 to 1,



Specific analysis	Reason	How
	correlation among all of the items that make up the scale (Pallant, 2011:6: e.g. Table 5.11	with higher values indicating greater reliability.
<b>ONE SAMPLE STATISTICS T-TEST</b>	To assess similar averages against a fixed value on the scale, e.g. Table 5.13	Applied to establish the mean and standard deviations, as descriptive statistics.
<b>T-TEST</b>	To compare two sets of data (before and after) (Pallant, 2011:105).	Applied to compare the mean scores on some continuous variable.
<b>EFFECT SIZES</b>	To determine the strength of the difference between groups, and the influence of the independent variable (Pallant, 2011:209), e.g. Table 5.15	Applied to reduce the subjectivity of the study matter and to clarify if the data results were per chance.
<b>PREVIOUS STUDY CORRELATION OUTCOMES</b>	To confirm that this study data analysis was trending in the same direction as previous studies	Applied to confirm that similar results have been previously found in other studies
<b>INTER ITEM CORRELATIONS</b>	To confirm that the study instrument was sound and that the design was balanced. All values should be positive, indicating that the items are measuring the same underlying characteristic (Pallant, 2011:100).	Applied to check for negative values. The presence of negative values could indicate that some of the items have not been correctly reverse scored.
<b>MANOVA</b>	Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) is used when you want to compare your groups on a number of different, but related, dependent variables (Pallant, 2011:106) refer to Chapter 2	Applied in past studies and referenced in this study. The two groups in this study completed different instruments and they could not be measured for MANOVA
<b>ANOVA</b>	A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to establish if the two groups in the study differ (although it will not tell you where the significant difference is), (Pallant, 2011:105) refer to Chapter 2	Applied in past studies and referenced in this study. The two groups in this study completed different instruments and they could not be measured for ANOVA
<b>PEARSON CORRELATION</b>	To explore the strength of the relationship between two continuous variables (Pallant, 2011:103) ,e.g. Table 5.23	This gives you an indication of both the direction (positive or negative) and the strength of the relationship. A positive correlation indicates that as one variable

Specific analysis	Reason	How
		increases, so does the other. A negative correlation indicates that as one variable increases, the other decreases.
<b>CORRELATION</b>	Correlation analysis is used to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables (Pallant, 2011:128)	Applied in the research questions 3 to try understand if there was a relationship or any rapport between the study variables – or not.

Source: Author's own compilation, adapted from Pallant (2011)

The TSI scores were transformed into aggregate scores using procedures to control for missing values. The online survey (Lime survey website, adapted for the institution) encouraged respondents to answer all the questions. There was a skip logic programmed into each question to prevent respondents from purposely or inadvertently skipping a question. The aggregate scores for each of the subscales of the TSI were obtained by calculating the mean, standard deviation and item-correlation for each of the items, occurring in each of the subscales. The Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (Pallant, 2011:103) was used to measure the strength of linear association between TSI items. Validity was examined in this study by measuring the Cronbach alpha among the subscales of the TSI.

#### 4.6.8 Quantitative: Limitations

There were a number of limitations and positives within the research design. The interviews were efficiently completed, despite the geographically dispersed areas in which the respondents were located. The interviews provided deep data on strategising and were a data 'overload' for the purpose of this study. (In this sense, the term 'overload' means that the respondents provided vast amounts of information not relevant to the study and had to be redirected to the interview questions based on the research question). There was a risk of researcher bias in the final selection of the respondents, despite an objective assessment and ranking based on the quality of their feedback. However, this bias was alleviated through the data triangulation process.

The online questionnaires (Lime survey website) data collection was time-consuming owing to the delayed responses from the respondents who had to be constantly reminded and requested to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was voluntary and some respondents used this option not to respond.

However, on a positive note, the research reported herein is based on the actual data, which reflected a natural occurrence within top management at the organisation. Overall, the majority of the respondents from the targeted populations co-operated with the study.

#### **4.6.9 Quantitative: Quality and rigour**

The quality was ensured by applying the empirical principles of quality and rigour in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. The quantitative aspect of the questionnaire required that reliability and validity be ensured, as explained in detail in the following section.

##### **4.6.9.1 Quantitative - Reliability**

Reliability can be assessed by posing the following three questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:156):

- Q.1) Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?
- Q.2) Will similar observations be obtained by other observers?
- Q.3) Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?

In response, the following applies:

Previous studies were referenced and a detailed systematic guide on data collection was listed.

The quantitative data was based on the questionnaire that was completed by the respondents.

However, other researchers may have different interpretations to what has been presented in this study. Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) TSI instrument has been shown to be reliable and valid in other cultures, in other settings, in other countries and with various different groups of respondents (Zhang & Sternberg, 1998; Grigorenko & Sternberg, 1998; Sternberg, 1997a; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1995a,

1995b; Zhang, 2005b; Cilliers & Sternberg, 2001; Balkis & Isiker, 2005; Fjell & Walhovd, 2004).

Table 4.7 presents an indication of the scale of reliabilities, and how these corresponded to each of the research questions. The table lists the Cronbach's alpha for each of the 13 subscales obtained from two previous studies (Zhang, 2005b; Zhang & Sternberg, 1998). There were anomalies with two specific subscales, both had the lowest score and both were below the 0,50 threshold. The anarchist thinking style was 0.43 and local thinking style was 0.43 both in Zhang and Sternberg's (1998) studies.

#### **4.6.9.2 Quantitative - Validity**

The validity of a scale refers to the degree to which it measures what it is supposed to measure (Pallant, 2011:7). Similarly, Noble and Smith (2015:34) echo that validity is the precision with which the findings accurately reflect the data. The three main types of validity discussed in the literature review are content validity, criterion validity and construct validity (Pallant, 2011:7):

- **Content validity** refers to the adequacy with which a measure or scale has sampled from the intended universe or domain of content.
- **Criterion validity** concerns the relationship between scale scores and some specified, measurable criterion.
- **Construct validity** involves testing a scale, not against a single criterion, but in terms of theoretically derived hypotheses concerning the nature of the underlying variable or construct.

Several studies verified the validity of the TSI (Fjell & Walhovd, 2004; Sternberg, 1994b; Zhang, 1999; Zhang & Sternberg, 2000). A relationship has also been established between the TSI and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Sternberg, 1994b). The theory of mental self-government (which influenced TSI) had previously been identified in 72 different respondents, from different countries, which provided evidence of the cross-cultural validity of the thinking styles. It was concluded that the TSI had predictive validity and heuristic validity in various settings. Heuristic validity is a practical approach to solving problems, especially under conditions of uncertainty, by accepting a satisfactory solution through decisions that are accurate and robust (Neth & Gigerenzer, 2015).

Table 4.8 indicates some correlations that supported the theory of mental self-government that was reported in these previous studies.

**Table 4.7: Scale reliabilities and corresponding question numbers**

CATEGORIES SCALE RELIABILITIES	ITEM NUMBERS (QUESTIONS)								ZHANG & STERNBERG (1998) N=622	ZHANG (2005B) N=333
<b>Liberal</b>	3	19	25	80	88	91	97	103	0,78	0,82
<b>Conservative</b>	20	27	45	51	53	55	66	79	0,68	0,77
<b>External</b>	7	35	36	61	71	77	82	84	0,73	0,71
<b>Monarchic</b>	8	18	46	52	54	56	90	98	0,46	0,68
<b>Hierarchical</b>	10	26	31	40	50	57	60	95	0,74	0,77
<b>Legislative</b>	4	12	21	32	59	65	72	86	0,71	0,78
<b>Executive</b>	5	15	22	24	58	62	69	74	0,64	0,6
<b>Internal</b>	17	28	33	43	67	81	93	102	0,78	0,75
<b>Global</b>	11	14	39	63	68	78	85	100	0,58	0,70
<b>Judicial</b>	1	9	38	41	48	73	89	96	0,71	0,71
<b>Anarchic</b>	29	34	42	64	70	83	94	104	0,43	0,55
<b>Oligarchic</b>	6	23	37	47	75	87	92	99	0,63	0,71
<b>Local</b>	2	13	16	30	44	49	76	101	0,43	0,69

Source: Zhang (2005b) and Zhang & Sternberg (1998)

**Table 4.8: Correlation of the theory of mental self-government**

<b>STERNBERG'S (1994B) RESEARCH FOUND THAT THE FOLLOWING THINKING STYLES HAD THESE CORRELATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS:</b>	Thinking Global and thinking local ( $r = -0.61$ , $p < .001$ ), Thinking Liberal with thinking legislative ( $r = 0.66$ , $p < .001$ ), Thinking conservative with thinking legislative ( $r = -0.50$ , $p < .001$ ), Thinking conservative with thinking executive ( $r = 0.59$ , $p < .001$ ) and Thinking liberal with thinking conservative ( $r = -0.60$ , $p < .001$ ).
<b>ZHANG AND STERNBERG (1998) STUDY ALSO SHOWED THE FOLLOWING CORRELATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS:</b>	Executive thinking and conservative thinking ( $r = 0.63$ , $p < .001$ ), Legislative thinking and liberal thinking ( $r = 0.41$ , $p < .001$ ), Conservative thinking and liberal thinking ( $r = -0.14$ , $p < .01$ ), Internal thinking and external thinking ( $r = -0.30$ , $p < .001$ ).
<b>ASSOCIATED THINKING STYLES</b>	The legislative thinking style and liberal styles are described as associated.  As were the executive thinking style and the conservative styles.
<b>NEGATIVELY CORRELATED THINKING STYLES</b>	The global thinking style and the local thinking styles were described as negatively correlated (Sternberg, 1994b).

Source: Adapted from Sternberg (1994); Zhang & Sternberg (1998) and Grigorenko & Sternberg (1998).

The next section reviews the interview part of the study where qualitative data was collected.

## 4.7 QUALITATIVE METHOD

The following section details the qualitative methodology that was applied in the study. Table 4.9 provides a preview of the section on the interview schedule highlighting the anomaly not captured in Table 4.1. This table is to be used with reference to Table 4.1,

**Table 4.9: Qualitative method – interviews anomalies**

<b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>	<b>RQ2: What strategising practices of top managers at the case organisation are commonly used?</b>
<b>ANOMALY TO BE NOTED IN THIS RESEARCH (1)</b>	Question B9: The participants were asked to identify which strategising practices they used on a regular basis. There was a list provided for the participants from which to make their selection.
<b>ANOMALY TO BE NOTED IN THIS RESEARCH (2)</b>	At the end of the interview, the participants were asked to identify their own thinking styles. A list of 13 TSI subscales was presented to them. The participants selected a thinking style for a crisis, a dominant way of doing things at the organisation, and an organisational group think style.

### 4.7.1 Qualitative: Research population

A sample was derived from the 133 top managers in the retail organisation under investigation. There were 33 participants for the interview section. In line with the central limit theorem, a 30% minimum response rate for the interviews was required (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:218).

The previous table Table 4 is a description of the systematic process that was followed in recruiting the participants to participate in the interview. It was anticipated that not all participants would want to complete the processes owing to their time constraints as top management.

### 4.7.2 Qualitative: Sampling strategies

Convenience sampling was used because the audience at the retail organisation's head office was a captive audience, situated in centralised areas. Purposive sampling was also applied as it relied on the judgment of the researcher to select the members of top management to be studied.



### **4.7.3 Qualitative: Pilot study**

The interview questions were time-tested with a retired director of the company (refer Section 1.12.2) and four other independent people external to the study. The minimum time it took to complete was 40 minutes. The retire director feedback also assisted in sense making of the questions.

### **4.7.4 Qualitative: Demographics data**

The interviews schedule had a preceding Section 'B' that contained demographic questions of the participants. Some of the information collected aligned with the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the participants. Additional information was used to help shape the background differences between the various members of top management (Appendix G).

### **4.7.5 Qualitative: Interview participants**

At the retail organisation, the most senior level of top management is the group executives and directors on the holding board. The management level was only available for the interviews. However, it was important to meet the minimum threshold of 30 participants required for a sample.

### **4.7.6 Qualitative: Basis for interview schedule**

The interviews were predominantly based on questions derived from the practice theory, refer to Chapter 3. The interviews were meant to generate qualitative data that was grouped into themes and analysed for triangulation purposes (Appendix G).

The following section expands on the theories that were used to develop the interview schedule questions in the study.

#### **4.7.6.1 Qualitative: Developing the interview questions**

The interview questions were derived from the literature review and the practice theory, as observed from the S-as-P perspective as referenced in Chapter 3. The questions were arranged in such a manner as to allow a thematic view of the data to be completed.

The data were collected from the interviews captured in real time. The participants' utterances were recorded verbatim. After transcribing the data, it was analysed by identifying and categorising broad themes that emerged (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The qualitative method was used to answer questions pertaining to the complex relationship between strategising practices and thinking styles.

The qualitative approach to this study also gave reflexive opportunities (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011) to focus on the complexity of organisational life and the related phenomena. For this study, it meant reviewing top management within the retail organisational context.

Table 4.10 shows the transitive steps taken to conduct the interviews with the top managers at the retail organisation.

**Table 4.10: Interviews - step-by-step**

<b>STEP 1</b>	The interviews were conducted with top management and those <b>participants</b> who declined to complete the online survey due to time constraints. If the <b>participants</b> indicated that they wished to be excluded from the online survey, a time was set up rather to conduct an interview.
<b>STEP 2</b>	The interview questions were emailed to the participants with a short explanation of the research purpose, along with the informed consent letter and permission letter attached.
<b>STEP 3</b>	The time for the interview was confirmed one week before the interview. On the day of the interview, a private meeting environment for an interview was selected to minimise interruptions. The retail organisation had a number of boardrooms and interview rooms available for private meetings.
<b>STEP 4</b>	The interview process took approximately 40 minutes to complete. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher.
<b>STEP 5</b>	During the interview process, the researcher asked details about how the participants worked with regard to strategising practices and how they thought about strategy. They were asked to identify their preferred thinking style (Appendix E) and their preferred practices (Appendix F) from a list. The researcher also took note of any non-verbal cues during the interview.
<b>STEP 6</b>	The participants' anonymity was ensured by not capturing nor revealing their names or details. The participants were given numbers e.g. 'respondent-1' for administering the data and their initials were scrambled for tracking their feedback.
<b>STEP 7</b>	The data were kept secure in the researcher's locked office for later analysis.

#### **4.7.6.2 Qualitative: The Interview schedule – the instrument**

Three types of interviews can be utilised to try to understand the 'what' and 'how' questions required for any study (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011:77):

- The first type entails a positivist or naturalist interview, which is interested in the facts.
- The second type is the emotionalist type, looking for authentic experiences (otherwise known as subjectivist).
- The third type is the constructionist type of interview, which looks at how meaning was formed during the actual interviewing process, which applied in this study.

The interview schedule was made up of 11 questions. The interview questions were derived from the literature review (refer Appendix G).

The data were of a qualitative nature, based on the participants' verbal opinions and conversational input (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011:77; Israel, 2013:3). For this study,

the data collected during the interview were used to triangulate with the other data collected in this study.

#### **4.7.7 Qualitative: Data analysis**

The researcher made audio recordings of the interviews and later transcribed the recordings. The transcribed interview data was captured on Atlas.ti (Version 7.5.15) for analysis. Atlas.ti is a workbench for the qualitative analysis of a large body of textual data, and is used for graphical and audio data. The key parts of the interviews were included to provide relevant narratives in order to:

- show evidence on views of each individual top manager on the respective CEOs who have led the organisation;
- give specific feedback during interviews;
- substantiate differing opinions;
- reflect dispositions of interview participants; and
- underline key messages.

#### **4.7.8 Qualitative: Literature review relevance to the interviews**

The literature review revealed dominant theories on thinking styles and strategising practice theories in the field of strategic management as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The broad themes of: praxis, artefacts, material practices, episodic practices, discursive practices, organisational norms, were entered into the Atlas.ti analysis tool. The detailed steps were:

- Step-1) Collect from the literature review on strategising practices and the thinking styles the key words were identified, refer Section 2.2.
- Step-2) Key words were entered into the Atlas.ti (refer to Appendix E and F)
- Step-3) The interviews were transcribed.
- Step-4) Participants were coded (refer to Appendix K)
- Step-5) A list of participants were entered into Atlas.ti.
- Step-6) Interviews were entered into Atlas.ti.

- Step-7) The Atlas.ti program was run to check for similarities between the transcribed interviews and the key words entered (derived from the literature review).
- Step-8) The program was run again to check for frequency of use of key words within the three data sets entered, searching for:
- 8.1) key words as per list, (refer to Appendix E and F)
  - 8.2) searching corresponding code of the participants, and
  - 8.3) searching the transcribed raw data.
- Step-8) Reports were drawn, to show highlighted sections of the transcriptions.
- Step-9) The researcher then selected what could be used for the study.

#### **4.7.9 Qualitative: Data analysis**

The notes taken during the interviews and the transcriptions of the interviews made up the raw data from the interviews. The notes were coded and the comments and reflections were classified into patterns and themes (De Hoyos & Barnes, 2012:7). Relationships were drawn to explore generalisations in order to construct the theory, using the Atlas.ti analysis tool.

The qualitative nature of the data led to descriptive substantive and formally classified data (De Hoyos & Barnes, 2012:23). This was in order to test the theory based on properties related to the research questions, and primarily, the nature of strategising practices and the thinking styles' theories.

The coding process included the following:

- Each of the CEOs was referred to as CEO-1, CEO-2, CEO-3, CEO-4 and CEO-5.
- The interview participants were referred to as Interview participant 1, Interview participant 2, etc.
- The nature of incidents where the research units of observation were mentioned (the number of CEOs in the retail organisation implied that different eras had different outcomes).
- The categories of the opinions given, based on strategising practices (this is based on the literature review) using the following broad themes: praxis, artefacts,

material practices, episodic practices, discursive practices, and organisational norms.

- The definition of strategising practices linked to various thinking styles.
- The main concerns of the participants based on their input (participants insisted that their thinking and choice of practices depended on environmental factors).
- The data required coding (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:158; Salkind, 2012:198). In this study, themes and trends emerged that provided a 'one-take' clear picture of how these managers thought.

The notes taken during the interview process were compared to the theory in literature. The data were checked for their representativeness, ranking the evidence by way of frequency of the units of observation and key strategising terms used in conversation (De Hoyos & Barnes, 2012:28). Lastly, broad thematic outlines were accounted for, crosschecked, and re-checked against the literature review for contradictions.

The interview transcripts were imported into the Atlas.ti program. A record of emergent codes was kept in a separate file, stored in the secured office. The file was a hermeneutic unit and it contained the codes and content descriptions for the categorising of trend analysis.

#### **4.7.10 Qualitative: Limitations**

There were a number of limitations and positives within the research design. The interviews were efficiently completed with no questions skipped, the demographic information filled in, and the participants gave detailed feedback, despite the geographically dispersed areas where the participants were located. The interviews provided data on strategising and there was a data overload for the purpose of this study. There was a risk of researcher "selection / participant bias" in the final selection of the participants, despite an objective assessment and ranking based on the quality of their feedback (Smith, & Noble, 2014:3). This selection / participant bias was alleviated through the data triangulation process and by recruiting participants that met the criteria aims of the inclusion and exclusion.

The positives of the research were the data collected was adequate and answered the research questions. The data reflected a natural occurrence within top management in the retail industry.

#### **4.7.11 Qualitative: Authenticity and trustworthiness**

The qualitative aspect of the interviews required that authenticity and trustworthiness be ensured as discussed in the next section.

##### **4.7.11.1 Qualitative: Authenticity**

For the qualitative phase, authenticity was related to the external criticism applied to the interview data to check whether it was genuine (Salkind, 2012:109). The interview data was genuine as the participants were digitally voice recorded stating their input into the study. The recordings were backed-up on the researcher's hard drive and kept in a secure office. The material can be accessed and reviewed to confirm and authenticate the input.

##### **4.7.11.2 Qualitative: Trustworthiness**

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009:331), the assurance from the researcher that confidential information is not being sought from the participants should make interviewees more relaxed and open. Combined with assurances about their anonymity, the level of confidence in trustworthiness reduces the possibility of interviewee bias or response bias (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:331). A true reflection of what is occurring is an issue of trustworthiness (Salkind, 2012:109). In this study, the trustworthiness of the interview data was assured by checking whether the input was similar across all the interview participants. There was no vastly different feedback from individual participants when compared to the sample group.

Accuracy (trustworthiness) was related to the internal criticism to check if the interview data presented a true reflection (Salkind, 2012:109). In this study, it referred to a reflection of what was occurring within the retail organisation.

Further, to enhance the trustworthiness elements of the interview, without disclosing too much detail about the participants, the following actions were taken (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:334):

- Time was allocated to write up a full set of notes soon after the interview.
- Specific notes about each interview were recorded.
- Contextual data was recorded (digital recording).
- Location of the interview (broad geographic area).

- The date and time (to keep track and not miss appointments).
- The setting of the interview (to minimise disturbances).
- No background information about the participants was noted, besides the demographic information.
- The immediate impression of how well (or badly) the interview went.
- Behaviour of the participants, for example, choice of words, reticent or vague.

## **4.8 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

High ethical standards were maintained in the study. Clearance was obtained (granted) to conduct this research - refer to the Department of Business Management Ethics Committee clearance certificate (Appendix I).

### **4.8.1 Confidentiality**

No details of the participants were disclosed and only numerical values were assigned to each participants. The data were kept in the researcher's locked and CCTV-monitored office at the retail organisation's head office in Johannesburg.

### **4.8.2 Informed consent letter**

Both the participants and respondents were given disclosure documents in accordance with the Unisa's Research Ethics Policy. A copy of the informed consent letter is Appendix C.

## **4.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this methodology chapter, the research procedures, approach and methodology were discussed, after which the constructivist philosophy behind the mixed data and the mixed-methods approach was explained in much more detail and its relevance to the study was detailed. The study was conducted in a number of sections, with each section having a specific methodology, unique data collection instrument, grouped respondents and participants, and an analysis tools. The issues of the questionnaire instrument's reliability and validity were addressed. The interview issues around authenticity and trustworthiness were also addressed in this chapter. The population and how sampling was done was explained. The methodology chapter was concluded



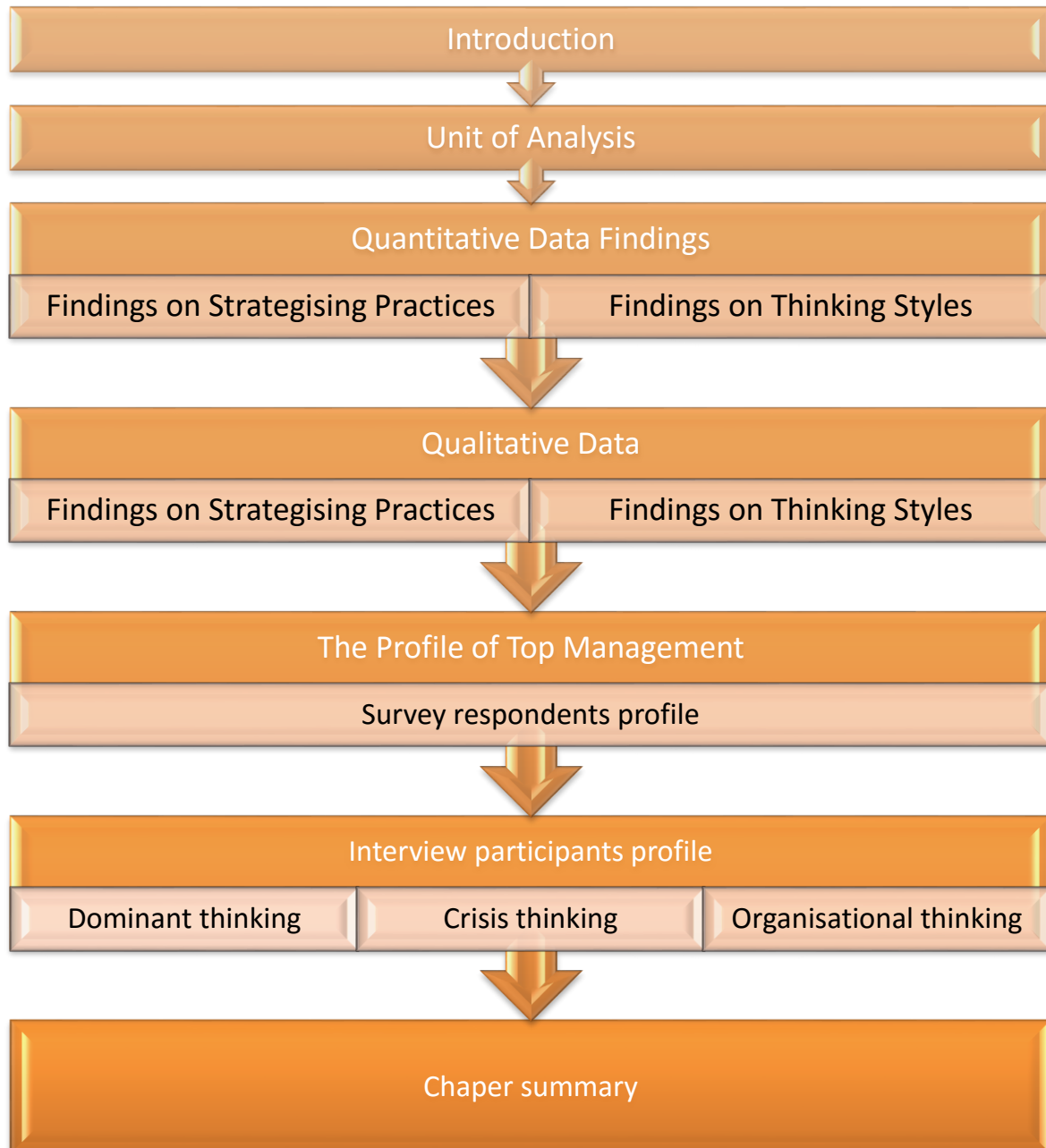
with a review of the ethical considerations. In Chapter 5, the findings and results are presented.

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## CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS

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Data are analysed in this chapter. The findings and results are interpreted in line with the research questions. Figure 5.1 presents the flow of topics in this chapter.



**Figure 5.1: The flow of topics for the chapter**

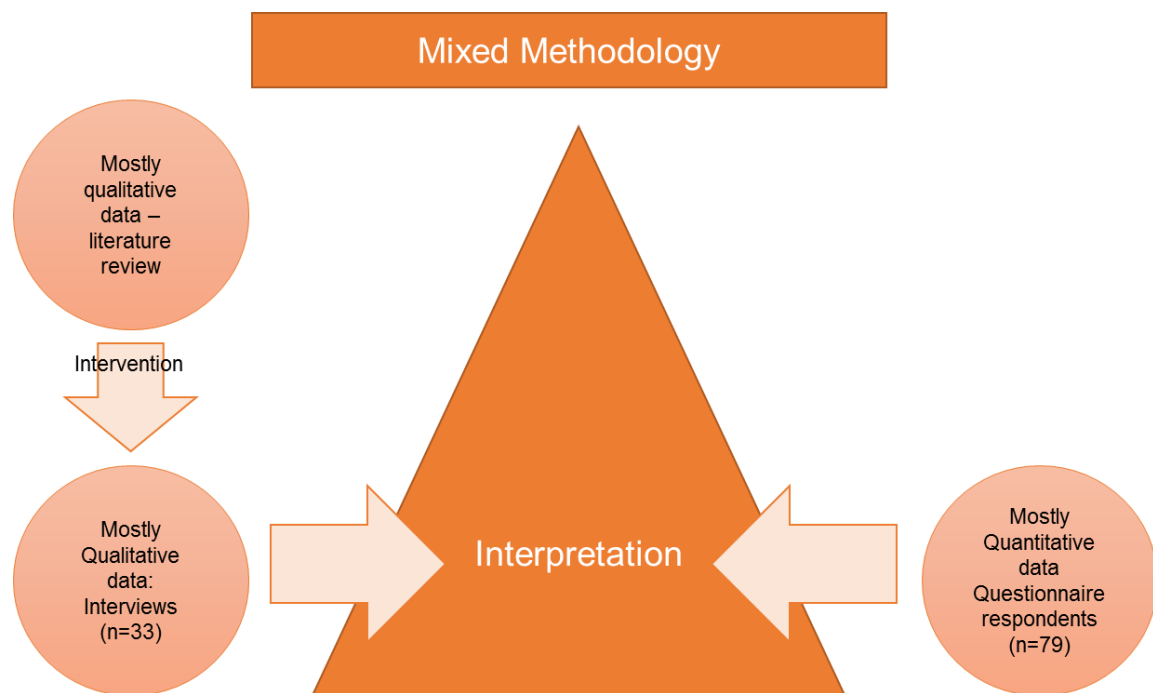
*“Research is a systematic process of data collection, data harvesting and data analysis ... [in order] to find things out... [Whilst] using rigorous methods to produce purposeful knowledge...” (Saunders et al., 2009:157).*

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to explore the possible rapport between strategising practices (considered the ‘doing’ of strategy) and the thinking styles of top managers at a South African retailer. In order to achieve this, the following was done:

- A literature review on both strategising practices and thinking styles theory was completed to form the background against which the units of observation were being set. The details of which are detailed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this dissertation.
- Quantitative data was collected using the TSI questionnaire that was analysed using SPSS program version 24.
- Qualitative data was collected using the interviews schedule that was analysed by applying Atlas.ti software.

Figure 5.2 demonstrates that data were collected concurrently and not sequential. There are distinct and separate data collection sections, for the both the quantitative and the qualitative data reported in this chapter. The two circles on the left show how information from the literature review fed into the formulation of the interview questions, with data output flowing into the interpretation triangle. On the right hand side, the circle shows how quantitative data fed into the interpretation. The triangle is how all the data were triangulated.



**Figure 5.2: Data sources and the data interpretation model**

The presentation of the findings and results are set out in this chapter, starting with the observed data from the population demographics, the units of investigation.

## **5.2 THE UNITS OF ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY**

The ‘unit of analysis’ is top management based at the case organisation. The units of observation are their strategising practices and their thinking styles.

In total, at the time the research was conducted, the retail organisation employed 133 top managers (N =133). Of this research population (or unit of investigation), there were 33 top managers who participated in the interviews process and there were 79 (n = 79) who responded to the online survey.

### **5.2.1 Quantitative : Description of questionnaire respondents**

The data presented in Table 5.1 indicate that the majority of the respondents did not specify their level of responsibility. The very senior level of top management at board level are made up of Grade A. Forty-three percent of respondents reported that they have more than 11 people reporting directly to them. One of top management’s roles

is team leadership and the size of the team made up of direct reports increases team dynamics and challenges leadership skills. Most of the respondents (46%) had more than 16 years' worth of experience, which talks to the longevity of their careers, and the time the ethos of the case organisation has had an impact of the individual top manager. There was a combined 15% of the respondents who had direct experience of all of the five different CEO's tenures.

**Table 5.1: Demographics - technical questions for the questionnaire respondents**

Questions No. B1	Grade - A	Grade - B	Grade - C	Non Specific
Please select your current level of responsibility?	0%	5%	38%	51%
B2	0 - 2 people	3 - 5 people	6 to 10 people	11 people +
How many persons directly report to you?	25%	7%	20%	43%
B3	1 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 years plus
How many years have you employed at the organisation?	15%	7%	28%	46%
B6	1 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 years plus
How many years have you been involved with strategising at the organisation?	38%	12%	5%	10%
B7	Yearly	Half year	Quarterly	Monthly
How often do you review plans department against the overall strategy of the organisation?	17%	20%	12%	15%

Table 5.2 indicated that 57% of the respondents (45 out of 79 cases) reported that they only implemented strategy. The expectation from the literature review was that top management mostly would be populated around the 'I directly input into the strategy' option. In this study, there was a limited 16% (or 13 out 79 cases) of respondents who viewed themselves in that way. The data could also imply that within top management, there is still a smaller core group that actually makes the strategic decisions. Research is required in terms of who makes up the core group within top management, and who actually formulate strategy.

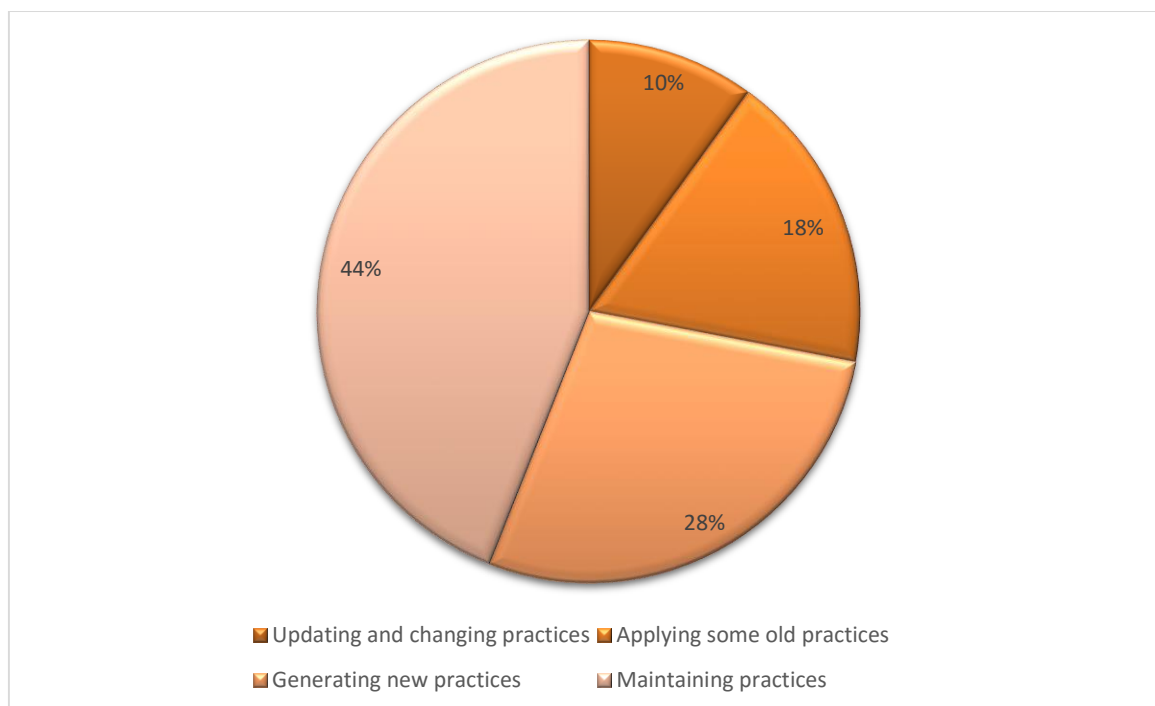
Based on feedback from the respondents, there was an expectation that top management would be equally split between the three options of 'direct input into

strategy' (16%), 'influence strategy' 13% and 'inform strategy' 9%. Yet interestingly, the actual data did not reflect this equal split.

**Table 5.2: Quantitative - Demographic question 5 questionnaire**

<b>HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH THE STRATEGY OF THE ORGANISATION?</b>				
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	I only implement the strategy	45	57.0	57.7
	I directly input into the strategy	13	16.5	16.7
	I influence the direction of the strategy	11	13.9	14.1
	I inform sections of the strategy	9	11.4	11.5
	Total	78	98.7	100.0
<b>Missing</b>	No response	1	1.3	
<b>Total n</b>		79	100.0	

Figure 5.3 indicates that over 18% (14 out of 79 cases) saw themselves as change agents who constantly updated practices, with 44% (35 out of 79 cases) maintaining old practices to try keep to an organisational identity, 10% (8 out of 79 cases) still applied some old practices and resisted newness. In addition, 28% (22 out of 79 cases) of the respondents reported to be continuously looking for new practices.



**Figure 5.3: Involved with the strategising practices question B8**

The following section examines the same set of questions under demographics that were in the online survey questionnaire. However, this time they were posed to the interview participants in order to compare the demographics on both groups.

### 5.2.2 Qualitative: Description of interview participants

The data presented in Table 5.3 indicate that the majority of the participants had a Grade-A level of responsibility meaning that they sat at board level and formulated the overall strategy of the case organisation. At this level, top managers had team of less than ten reporting directly into them. However, 43% of the participants reported that they have more than 11 people reporting directly to them. Most of the participants (94%) had been in the company for more than 16 years. More than 50% of the participants reported that they gave direct input into the case organisations overall strategy. Over 31% reported to be reviewing the overall strategy at least once a month. The highlights of the data confirm the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study.

**Table 5.3: Demographic section - technical questions for the interview participants**

Questions No. B1	Grade - A	Grade - B	Grade - C	Non Specific
Please select your current level of responsibility?	63%	37%		
B2	0 - 2 people	3 - 5 people	6 to 10 people	11 people +
How many persons directly report to you?	13%	37%	37%	13%
B3	1 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 years plus
How many years have you employed at the organisation?		6%		94%
B5	Implement	Influence	Inform	Input
How are you involved with the strategy of the organisation?	31%	13%	6%	50%
B7	Yearly	Half year	Quarterly	Monthly
How often do you review plans department against the overall strategy of the organisation?	25%	25%	19%	31%

Table 5.4 showed that 45% of the interview participants (or 15 out of 33 cases) reported they had more than 16 years' worth of involvement with strategising. The tenure aligned with the period under review for this study, which was the last 15 years at the retail organisation, where there were five different CEOs at the helm of the organisation. This proved to be important information later in the triangulation of the data to understand each CEO's tenure during the 15-year period in context.

Equally important was the 27% of the interview participants (or 9 out of the 33 cases) who were considered as 'new' to the organisation as they had less than 5 years' experience.

**Table 5.4: Demographic question B6 – interview participants**

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED WITH STRATEGISING AT THE ORGANISATION?				
		Frequency	%	Valid %
Valid	16 plus	15	45.5	46.9

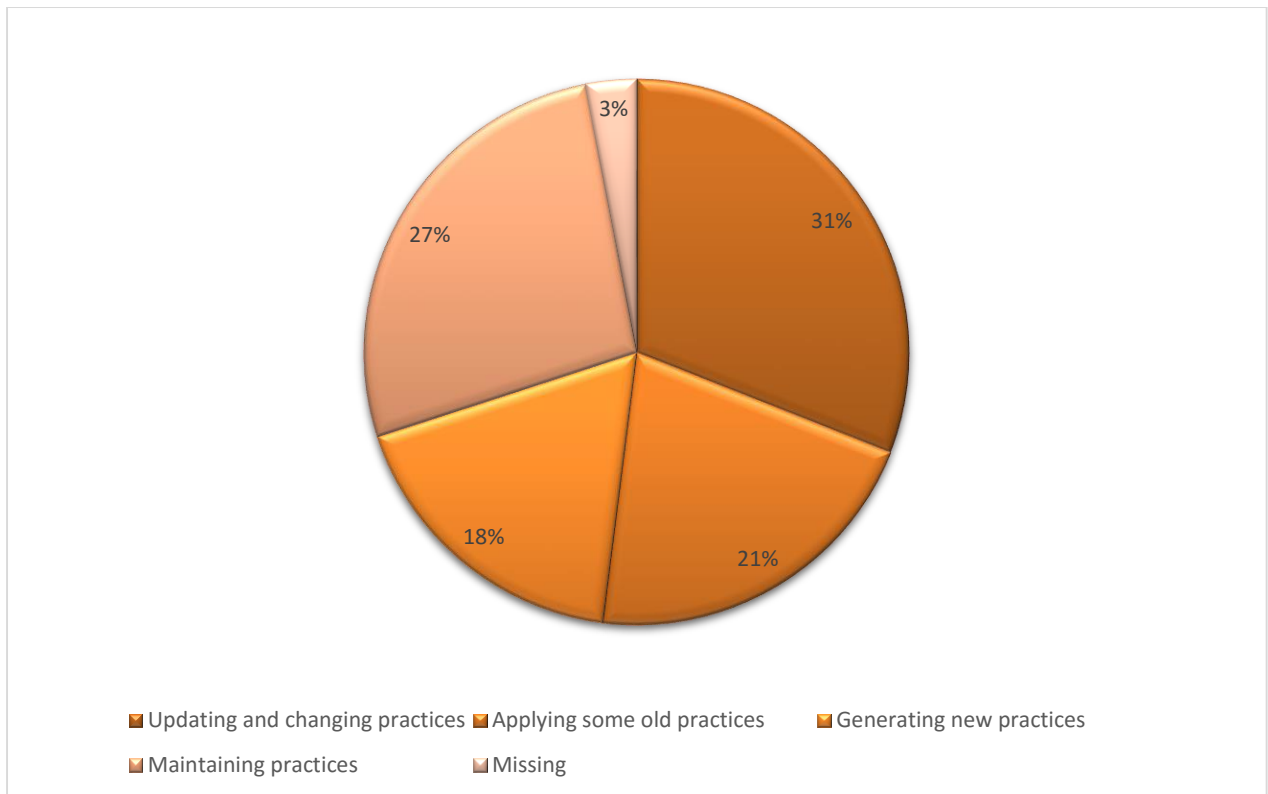


	1 to 5 years	9	27.3	28.1
	6 to 10 years	7	21.2	21.9
	11 to 15 years	1	3.0	3.1
	Total	32	97.0	100.0
Missing	No response	1	3.0	
Total n		33	100.0	

\*Highest score and lowest score highlighted

Figure 5.4 is a chart illustrating the interviewees' responses to an excerpt of Q8 or question 8. They were asked how they used strategising practices in their own departments.

The data showed that over 31% (10 out of 32 cases) saw themselves as change agents who constantly updated practices, with 27% (9 out of 32) maintaining old practices to try to maintain the organisational identity, 21% (7 out of 32 cases) still applied some old practices and resisted change (newness). There were only 18% (6 out of 32 cases) of the participants who reported to be continuously looking for new practices. The low number becomes notable in the recommendations section when considering that, as shown in Table 5.2, 27% were reported to be new to the organisation (less than 5 years).



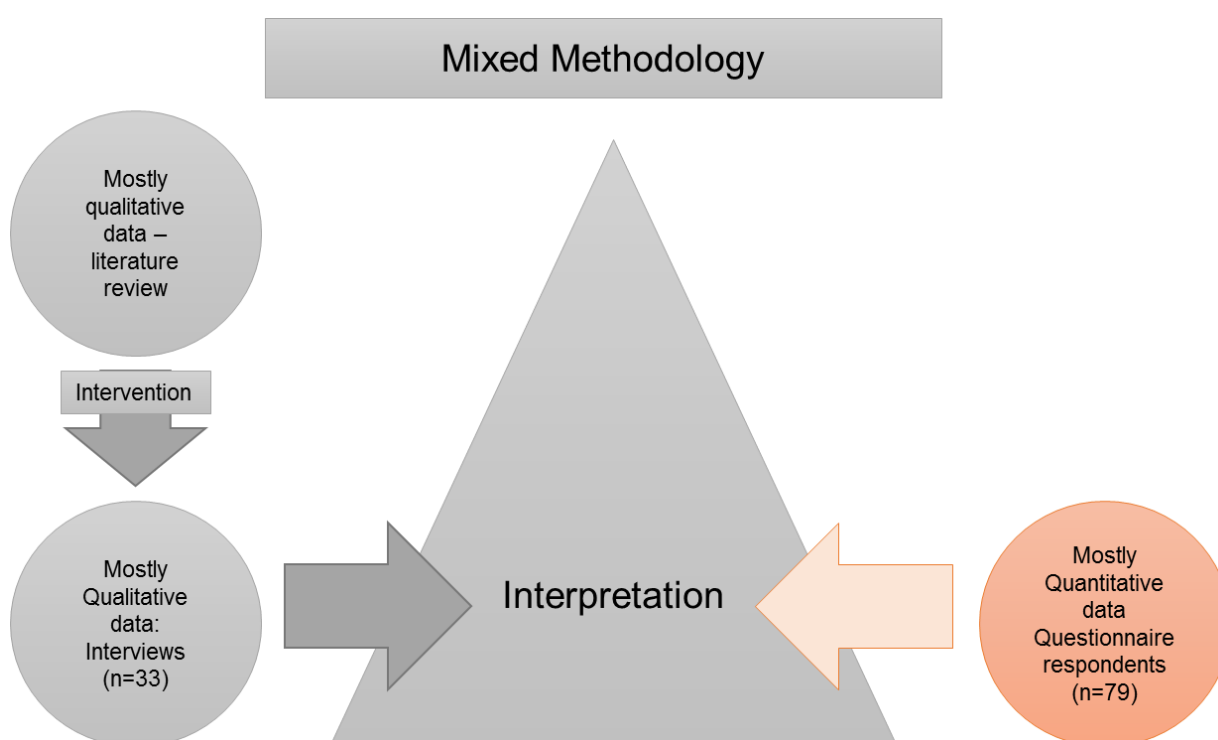
**Figure 5.4: Interview question B8 - the use of strategising practices**

The following section presents the findings of the study, starting first with the quantitative data findings from the analysis of the questionnaire data.

## 5.3 QUANTITATIVE DATA - FINDINGS

The bulk of the quantitative data was derived from the questionnaire, and its position within the overall study is highlighted in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5 is a graphical illustration of the quantitative aspects of the study receiving feedback from 79 respondents.



**Figure 5.5: The quantitative aspects: Questionnaire**

The following section starts a detailed review of strategising practices as selected by the respondents of the online instrument. The section looks closely at the frequency of use for the seven strategising practices as previously discussed in Chapter 2.

### 5.3.1 Quantitative data - Frequency of strategising practices

The respondents were provided online with the list in Appendix "F". The field is blank as they could fill in other practices they felt they were using. Some of the respondents wrote about strategic tools but described the tools using words that the researcher could link back to strategising practices. Some respondents selected all the strategising practices provided and then opted to rank the strategising practices according to either their perception of "importance" or "time taken-up by the practice."

For the study, it was more important to see which practices were most commonly used and by which respondents.

When asked what strategising practices they applied, the quantitative respondents' mostly selected material practices at 36% (29 times out of 79 cases), showing that they spend the majority of their time engaged in applying: a) strategic tools, b) and relying on office space and physical objects to materialise the strategy.

This was followed by episodic as practice at 25% (20 out of 79 cases). The rankings demonstrated the use of practices on a regular basis. Table 5.5 deals with the data analysis of question 9 in the questionnaire demographics section. When asked what practices they used the least, respondents selected organisational norms and context-specific socialisation practices, both at 6% (both at 5 out of 79 cases). This also verified the outcome of the data analysis of question 9 as indicated in the table below.

**Table 5.5: Strategising practices commonly used by questionnaire respondents**

PLEASE LIST THE VARIOUS STRATEGISING PRACTICES THAT YOU USE ON A REGULAR BASIS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Material	29	36.7	36.7	36.7
	Episodic	20	25.3	25.3	62.0
	Artefacts	7	8.9	8.9	70.9
	Discursive	7	8.9	8.9	79.7
	Praxis	6	7.6	7.6	87.3
	Context	5	6.3	6.3	93.7
	Organisational norms	5	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	79	100.0	100.0	

The next section is a presentation of the findings from analysis the data on thinking styles as selected by respondents to the online questionnaire. It starts with the scale of reliabilities, followed by a review of the t-tests, followed by a short review of the statistics on strategising practices.

### **5.3.2 Quantitative data - Scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha)**

As shown in Table 5.6, the important factor was that in this study the TSI subscales were all above the 0.70 threshold. The values in this table show that the grouping of the questions into TSI subscales was an internal consistency reliability measure (Pallant, 2011:97)

The Cronbach alpha also showed that each item in the sub-scale, when compared to other questions, showed a reliable statistical relationship. The highest score of reliability was for the external thinking style at 0.887.

The respondents were management, who engaged in tasks that provided a social network in the workplace. This offered them maximum opportunities for developing interpersonal relationships at work. From a strategising practices point of view, context socialisation practices are identified within this group of management.

The lowest score of reliability was with the judicial thinking style (0.749), which was above the threshold. The thinking style itself requires top management to identify themselves as being judgmental and critical of other's work. The choice of these words may have had an impact on their selections.

**Table 5.6: Cronbach's alpha reliability for the TSI**

THINKING STYLE	CRONBACH'S ALPHA	NO. OF ITEMS
External	0.887*	8
Monarchic	0.884*	8
Hierarchical	0,880*	8
Conservative	0.872*	8
Executive	0.871*	8
Liberal	0.858*	8
Legislative	0.828*	8
Internal	0.791	8
Global	0.778	8
Local	0.776	8
Anarchic	0.769	8
Oligarchic	0.764	8
Judicial	0.749	8

*\*Highest scores highlighted*

### **Introducing the mean**

The mean is the sum of a set of scores divided by the number of scores, and is part of the measures of central tendency (Salkind, 2012:163). The mean is also part of descriptive statistics, and is sometimes referred to as the total perceived stress, especially in line graphs (Pallant, 2011:71).

In this study, the mean is applied to suggest a strong relationship among certain items, certain participants thinking styles and certain strategising practices.

The following section refers back to the Likert scale that was used as part of the questionnaire instrument. Table 5.7 presents the wording in the scale that ranges from “1” to “7”. The midpoint of “4”, where the respondents might deviate and give a neutral response is worded as “somewhat well”.

**Table 5.7: Adaptation of the 7-point Likert scale**

1	2	3	4*	5	6	7
Not at all well	Not very well	Slightly well	Somewhat well	Well	Very well	Extremely well

*\*Four is the midpoint of the scale.*

In this study, the respondents were asked to answer 104 questions, with options to make their selection between '1 and 7'.

The first five questions are listed as examples of what the online instrument questionnaire looks like (Lime survey website) (Appendix D):

- *I prefer to deal with specific problems rather than with general questions.*
- *When talking or writing about ideas, I stick to one main idea.*
- *When starting a task, I like to brainstorm ideas with friends or peers.*
- *I like to set priorities for the things I need to do before I start doing them.*
- *When faced with a problem, I use my own ideas and strategies to solve it.*

Respondents who rated their answers closer to "1" did not have a high degree to which they felt characterised by the sentiment of the statement, or did not associate with the implication of the question. Conversely, respondents who rated their answers on the higher end of the scale and close to "7", had a high the degree to which they are characterised by the sentiment conveyed in the statement or felt a strong association with that statement. Invariably, there were questions which did not generate strongly negative or strongly positive answers; these tended to be around the "4" mark.

Once all 104 questions are answered, a trend or pattern emerged. Groups of answers (items) indicated the preferred thinking styles of the questionnaire respondents. Where the respondents consistently scored themselves lower than "4" for a particular thinking style, they are deemed not to be strongly associated with that thinking style. The questionnaire respondents are deemed to have a certain thinking style if they have scored themselves higher than 4 in a particular style of thinking. The highest top three styles are considered indicative of those respondents' thinking profile.

### 5.3.3 Quantitative data - t-test, the mean and standard deviation

The mean and standard deviation are part of descriptive statistics and have a number of uses (Pallant, 2011:53):

- To describe the characteristics of the sample;
- To check variables for any violation of the assumptions underlying the statistical techniques that are used to address the research questions; and
- To address specific research questions.

In this study, the mean score of 4.00 represents a neutral outcome, meaning the subscales selected close to this number are non-committal on their thinking styles, or their selection is a default selection. Items scoring closer to 5.00 imply an associated relationship with the 'Somewhat well' rating. This is the fixed point on the scale. Therefore, from 4.51 upwards (or monarchic thinking style) up to 5.62 (or hierarchical), it was found that thinking styles are meaningfully associated with the rating of 'Extremely well' at the higher end of the scale. This means that nine respondents clustered together (scoring of 4.51 and above, as highlighted in the middle column) out of the 13 subscales.

An independent-samples t-test was used to compare the mean score, on some continuous variable, for two different groups (Pallant, 2012:239). In this study, it was used to assess the sample average against a fixed value on the Likert scale (5.00). While the use of this type of scale is common practice in strategic management research, the interpretation of a Likert type scale becomes important to determine what the fixed value is.

Table 5.8 presents the t-test scores of the set value in columns showing the mean and the standard deviation. There was a notable pattern in this grouping. The table ranked the means from strongest (5.62) to weakest (4.27). Low standard deviation could imply more consistency, which links to kurtosis when compared to other measurements. Skewness and kurtosis values give information about the distribution of scores for two groups under a study, with higher kurtosis as the result of infrequent extreme deviations or outliers (Pallant, 2011:100). Kurtosis is sometimes seen as the characterisation of 'peakedness' in the distribution (Pallant, 2011:100), which would be a mistake in this study.



Table 5.8 shows that the top five thinking styles had means greater than the midpoint and were closer to “7”, with the standard deviation (SD) reported alongside:

- Hierarchical 5.62 (SD 0.978) - Top managers who prefer hierarchy of goals, priority of tasks and are systematic, organised decision-makers.
- Liberal 5.44 (SD 1.023) - Top managers who go beyond existing rules, showing a preference for novelty, ambiguity and are willing to try new ways.
- Legislative 5.31 (SD 0.988) - Top managers who formulate new ideas by their own rules and prefer constructive planning-based activities.
- External 5.28 (SD 1.165) - Top managers who are extroverted, preferring interpersonal relationships and social settings.
- Executive thinking styles 5.08 (SD 1.096) - Top managers who implement tasks with set guidelines, follow rules and methods.

Table 5.8 also shows the following three thinking styles have the lowest mean scores:

- Oligarchic (4.41) – top managers who work with no set priorities;
- Internal (4.36) – top managers who prefer to work independently; and
- Conservative (4.27) – top managers who adhere to existing rules and procedures.

Previous studies showed low scores for monarchic, global, conservative, and oligarchic (Murphy, 2006). These low means were still around the midpoint of 4, which was purposefully designed to be a neutral response. The conservative and monarchic thinking styles had the highest data points, spread further out from the mean. Previous research has shown that the conservative, global and monarchic styles have consistently rated the lowest.

**Table 5.8: T-test – One sample statistics**

RANKED BY MEAN		
n = 79	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hierarchical	5.62*	0.978
Liberal	5.44*	1.023*
Legislative	5.31*	0.988
External	5.28*	1.165*
Executive	5.08*	1.096*
Judicial	4.97*	0.901
Anarchic	4.94*	1.032*
Local	4.86*	1.044*
Monarchic	4.51*	1.329*
Global	4.49	1.037*
Oligarchic	4.41	1.112*
Internal	4.36	1.132*
Conservative	4,27	1,332*
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>4.89</b>	<b>1.090</b>

\*Ranked by highest mean. Highest standard deviation. The most important to note is the low standard deviation.

### **Standard deviation**

Standard deviation is the extent to which values differ from the mean. Conceptually and statistically, it is important to look at the extent to which the data values for a variable are spread around their mean (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:447). The column on the right in Table 5.9 shows the ranking of the standard deviation from highest (1.331) to lowest (0.900), describing the dispersion of data values around the mean. The top five (highlighted) standard deviations were high and showed that only some respondents were somewhat associated and others were mostly not associated in behaviour. The respondents below 1.000 could be said to be clustered around a selection a specific thinking styles, meaning their answers were concentrated towards the positive confirmation and there was less variation in their scores. The respondents who scored higher than 1.000 for the standard deviation were more spread out across the range.

As seen in Table 5.9, the lowest standard deviations were for legislative (0.988), hierarchical (0.978) and judicial (0.901) – implying consistency and concentrated selection of these thinking styles. While the legislative and hierarchical thinking styles have been commonly selected elsewhere, the judicial thinking style now enters the top three selection. In addition, the judicial thinking style is associated with managers who like to evaluate rules and procedures by passing judgement.

The standard deviation from the midpoint was unusually high, implying that the respondents answered inconsistently and did not agree, specifically for the following thinking styles:

- Conservative SD 1.332;
- Monarchic SD 1.329 - single minded about achieving a specific goal;
- External SD 1.165;
- Internal SD 1.132; and
- Oligarchic SD 1.112.

The thinking styles of global (4.49), oligarchic (4.41), internal (4.36), and conservative (4.27) were non-associated with each of the subscales. High levels of standard deviation imply that the outliers were much higher than normal, meaning that some respondents were on the fringes of selecting these particular thinking styles. Standard deviations that were high did not fall within the 64% anticipated curve ratio if data were to be displayed in a graph. High standard deviation shows that the data points of the graph were spread widely across the whole range.

**Table 5.9: T-test – One sample statistics**

<b>RANKED BY STANDARD DEVIATION</b>		
<b>n = 79</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Conservative	4.27	1.332*
Monarchic	4.51	1.329*
External	5.28	1.165*
Internal	4.36	1.132*
Oligarchic	4.41	1.112*
Executive	<b>5.08*</b>	1.096*
Local	4.86	1.044*
Global	4.49	1.037*
Anarchic	4.94	1.032*
Liberal	<b>5.44*</b>	1.023*
Legislative	<b>5.31*</b>	0.988
Hierarchical	<b>5.62*</b>	0.978
Judicial	4.97	0.901
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>4.89</b>	<b>1.090</b>

*\*Highest mean. Ranked highest standard deviation. The notable scores are the three bottom thinking styles below 1.000.*

Table 5.10 shows that there is a large effect size for the hierarchical, internal and conservative thinking styles.

This implies that:

- The difference in means is statistically important to note;
- This effect size clarifies if the data result was per chance;
- The effect size would increase if the difference in means was larger; and
- Some of the responses were consistently close to the mean (and not spread out).

The effect size is a highly subjective matter and is often open to interpretation. Table 5.10 shows that the hierarchical thinking styles was selected at 63% from the mean, and if the sample size (n=79) had to be substantially increased, there is a 63% likelihood that the hierarchical thinking style would still be prevalent. However, the Internal and the Conservative styles would be least likely to feature.

Table 5.10: Effect sizes

<b>EFFECT SIZE = [MEAN OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP] – [MEAN OF CONTROL GROUP]</b> <b>STANDARD DEVIATION</b>		
<i>Small (0.2)</i> <i>medium (0.5)</i> <i>large (0.8)</i>		
Hierarchical	0.63	Large
Liberal	0.43	Medium
Legislative	0.31	Medium
External	0.24	Small
Executive	0.08	Small
Judicial	-0.03	Small
Anarchic	-0.06	Small
Local	-0.13	Small
Monarchic	-0.37	Medium
Global	-0.49	Medium
Oligarchic	-0.53	Medium
Internal	-0.57	Large
Conservative	-0.55	Large

The results were as expected. Historically, the hierarchical, legislative and judicial thinking styles have ranked high in other studies (Sternberg 1994; Murphy, 2006:94).

#### 5.3.4 Quantitative data - One sample t-test

The t-test is a test statistic with a known probability distribution (the t-distribution). There are a number of different types of t-tests available in SPSS, including the independent-samples t-test (used to compare the mean scores of two different groups) and the paired-samples t-test (used to compare the mean scores for the same group of people on two different occasions) (Pallant, 2011:239). T-tests can be used to test

whether a correlation coefficient is different from zero; it can also be used to test whether two group means are different (Field, 2009:324)

In order to test whether the data had any inverse relationship, where the behaviour of one item showed an opposite effect (significant difference) on another item, a 'one sample t-test' was done.

Table 5.11 data shows t-test scores for the TSI. The respondents (n=79) were measured for their mean scores based on the 13 sub-scales of the TSI. The test value was '5', with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 7. The t-test compared the difference in the means within the respondents, using a measure of the spread of the scores (2-tailed). The difference between hierarchical, liberal, legislative, external, and the executive were positive, atypical and did not occur by chance. Moreover, the averages were real differences that could be observed in the whole respondents team, implying that from this sample (n=79), extrapolations could be made about the total population (n=133).

The effect size of this is that even if the population (n=133) was increased to the whole management team, the difference in thinking styles would still be statistically noteworthy, based on the sub-scale averages, sample size and standard deviation.

There were scores in the data with probabilities of less than 0.05, specifically for hierarchical, liberal, monarchic, global, oligarchic, conservative, and internal (highlighted). These meant: a) they were statistically related, b) the effect size of the data had practical meaning, and c) that the respondents were consistent in their selection of items classifying them as each of these thinking styles.

There were negative t-test scores for judicial, anarchic, local, monarchic, global, oligarchic, conservative and internal, (highlighted) meaning that these:

- scored less than the mean;
- the scores trended in the opposite direction to the rest of the sub-scale;
- an inverse relationship to the mean existed; and
- the respondents were notably different to the prevalent thinking.

**Table 5.11: One sample test**

<b>Ranked by sig (2 tailed)</b>		
<b>n = 79</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Judicial	-0,269*	0,789
Anarchic	-0,524*	0,602
Executive	0,676	0,501
Local	-1,174*	0,244
External	2,116	0,038*
Legislative	2,755	0,007*
Monarchic	-3,258*	0,002*
Liberal	3,772	0,000*
Global	-4,341*	0,000*
Oligarchic	-4,639*	0,000*
Conservative	-4,802*	0,000*
Internal	-4,994*	0,000*
Hierarchical	5,547	0,000*

*\*Highest t score. Significance at 2-tailed*

To summarise, the respondents at the organisation could be classified as mostly hierarchical thinkers as that was the prevalent thinking style. The hierarchical thinking style and Liberal thinking style were interesting to note owing to their dominance compared to the rest of the subscale. The executive, judicial and anarchic would be susceptible to effect size, meaning that the data were unstable.

In the above Table 5.11, it is evident that eight of the subscales' data results were stable (column on the right). This means that the following four were the most unstable: judicial (0.789), anarchic, executive, and local. Future research could use larger samples and expect variation when compared to this study, especially regarding these specific thinking styles.

The section on the findings on the online questionnaire that provided quantitative data to be analysed ends. The following section is a detailed review of the findings from the interviews, which provided qualitative data to be analysed.

## 5.4 QUALITATIVE DATA – FINDINGS ON CEO

The findings regarding the qualitative data collected during the interviews are presented in this section. Figure 5.6 shows the qualitative, marked in the second circle from the top on the left-hand side that is highlighted. The data collected were mostly qualitative and based on the interviews conducted. The grey shaded figures are kept in the figure for referencing to indicate where this section fits in the study.

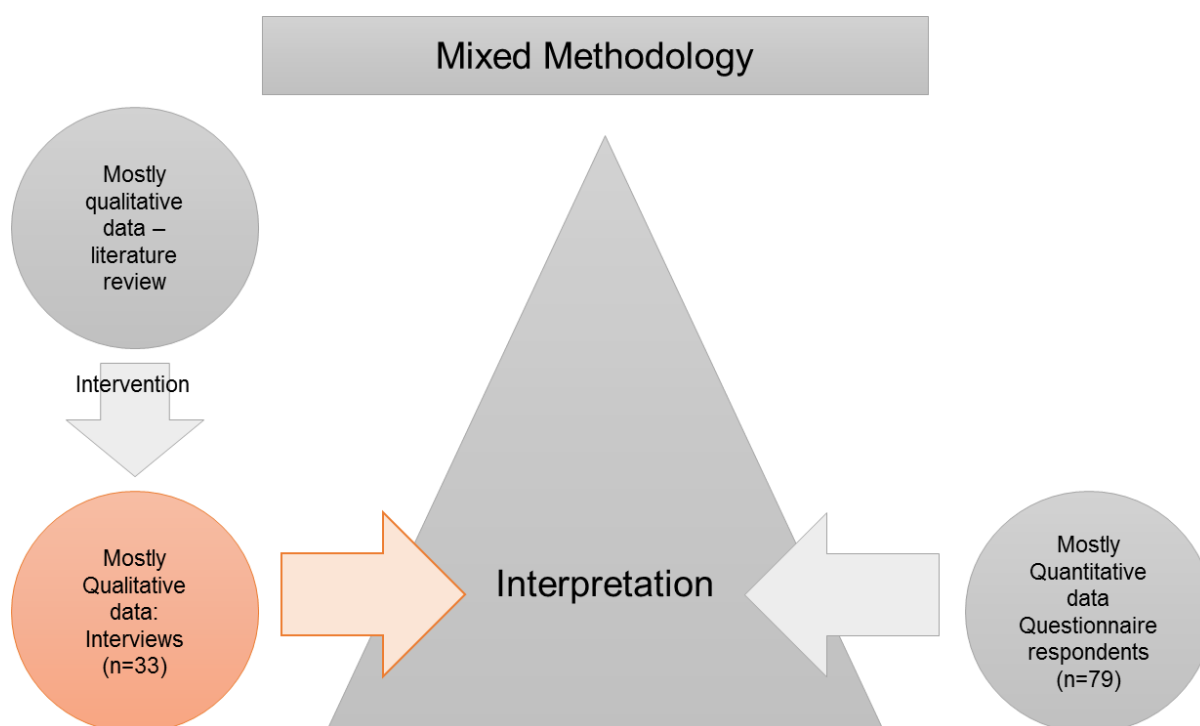


Figure 5.6: The Qualitative aspect of the model: Interviews

### 5.4.1 Qualitative data on strategising practices by CEO

In the literature review, seven main strategising practices themes were identified as: 1) episodic practices, 2) material practices, 3 artefacts), 4 praxis), 5 organisational norms), 6) context-specific socialisation and 7) discursive practices, all applied in this study (refer to Chapter 2).

The interview participants gave feedback based on the questions in the interviews schedule. There was some discussion around what constitutes as ‘strategising practice’ and not as a ‘strategising tool’. The participants’ answers were grouped into themes, based on what they said. The themes were grouped as follows:



- Episodic practices and material practices were often mentioned. Therefore, they are grouped together based on the frequency of being mentioned.
- Artefact and praxis were reported together because they were often mentioned together. Therefore, they are grouped together based on frequency of being mentioned.
- Organisational norms and praxis were often mentioned together. Therefore, they are grouped together based on frequency of being mentioned.
- Context-specific socialisation practices were reported alone.
- Discursive practices were the one common factor over the period under review.
- Organisational norms and praxis because they were often mentioned together. Therefore, they are grouped together based on frequency of being mentioned.

The following section analyses these strategising practices as themes with evidence from the interviews. The organisation has had five different CEOs over the 15-year period under review. In this study, they are referred to as CEO 1, CEO-2, CEO-3, CEO-4, and CEO-5. They represent the highest decision making body within the top management structure.

### 5.4.1.1 Findings on episodic and material practices as themes

Synthesis of the findings related to episodic and material practices is presented below.

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS INPUT AS TO HOW CERTAIN PRACTICES STARTED
<p><b>The participants could trace the specific period of the specific event in which certain practices started. However, the relevance and the meaning as to why some practices have persisted, was lost into the history of the organisation. Some practices could be associated with certain periods and with certain top managers.</b></p>	<p><u>Interviewer 1 reflected on initiatives as strategising practices. They questioned the purpose and meaning behind certain new initiatives:</u></p> <p><i>“There was a lot of initiatives that we got involved with. But if you went back and said what was the intended purpose behind it – often that was lacking.”</i></p> <p>Interview participant 9 reflected on a period when ‘customer was king’ therefore every practice then had to tie into that mantra:</p> <p><i>“If we make the shopping environment a better place, everything else (practices) will fall into place.”</i></p> <p><u>Interview 2 traced the genesis of some practices as being forced upon the organisation by the situation and environment:</u></p> <p><i>“Most practices started from crises”</i></p> <p><u>Interviewer 4 viewed the organisation holistically and observed that the organogram was cluttered with over 25 different divisions that resulted in duplication of work. This required the consolidation of some common practices:</u></p> <p><i>“The structure of the organisation, the organogram of [many] layers and the [various] levels forced certain practices to be adopted or started.”</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 3 pointed out the CEO for each period had to endorse the major practices that we started during their tenure:</u></p> <p><i>“Remember the family (founders of the organisation) appointed each of the CEOs. Don’t forget that that each CEO had full reign to formulate their strategy and implement the practices best suited for their tenure.”</i></p>
<p><b>In some instances, the participants claimed ownership of having started some strategising practices. This often had to do with the installation of an administrative function in place to enable work in their department. The dispersion</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participant 3 defended their legacy, almost demanding acknowledgement:</u></p> <p><i>“I formulated the [strategising practices] that we are currently using.”</i></p> <p><u>This view was supported by Interview participant 13 who said,</u></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS INPUT AS TO HOW CERTAIN PRACTICES STARTED
of that initiative throughout the organisation was not well communicated nor understood, as such this strategising practice was dissociated, meaning that without ownership or meaning, most strategising practices become just work.	<p><i>"I started the portfolio... away from other departments in order to involve the previously excluded black people."</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 6 made the connection to the need for the organisation to centralise certain functions to the starting of new practices:</u></p> <p><i>"The formalisation of the company from an entrepreneurial [orientated] company to that of a [centralised corporate] strategy required that we start new practices. We had to tighten up the [administration] of some practices."</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 9 made a practical connection between resources (funds) and necessity of certain practices:</u></p> <p><i>"The need for [strategising practices] is financially driven... and it is commercially driven... remember that retail is pretty basic ... it is about the where we trade 'the stores', the what being 'the products we sell' and the how being 'the price at which we sell it'... so the strategy and practices must speak that."</i></p> <p><u>This view is supported by Interview participant 12 also made the connection between efficiency and practical use and who said:</u></p> <p><i>"Common sense [necessitated] accounting practices and administration practices."</i></p>

#### 5.4.1.2 Findings on artefacts and praxis as practice themes

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEWEES RESPONDED TO HOW STRATEGISING PRACTICES WERE CHALLENGING TO IMPLEMENT
Participants pointed out that the retail organisation was a large organisation within the South African industry, with over 80 000 employees and 1 500 branches and over 25 different departments. This meant that the complexity theory applied because	<p><u>Interview participant 2 reflected on the 25 different departments as at times having conflicting interests:</u></p> <p><i>"There is always conflict of interest amongst the executives on what needs to be prioritised, based on their own departments' specific objectives."</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEWEES RESPONDED TO HOW STRATEGISING PRACTICES WERE CHALLENGING TO IMPLEMENT
<p><b>negotiating a common strategy within this interconnected and large environment was challenging.</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participant 5 considered the size of the retail organisation and challenges it faces when delivering seamless customer experience:</u></p> <p><i>"[The] sheer volume of products distorts the reality of customer experience and challenges the implementation of practices"</i></p> <p><u>This view of a busy organisation was supported by Interview participant 14 who said:</u></p> <p><i>"[The organisation] is KPI driven. There is huge pressure on us to achieve targets." Implied that the end justifies the selection of whatever practice is selected as long as it helps deliver the KPI.</i></p> <p>Interview participant 6 took the complexity further and considered the culture within:</p> <p><i>"The diversity of the race groups that make up this community requires a lot of control." Implied that any initiative in new practices has to be workshopped taking into account the diverse community.</i></p> <p><u>This was supported by Interview participant 7 who said:</u></p> <p><i>"There were just so many different cultures to contend with."</i></p> <p>(Culture and gender were not specifically examined in this study, but may provide avenues for future research.)</p>
<p><b>Some participants identified information technological problems such as old systems, inefficient supply chain systems and poorly integrated systems across departments. The technology was either lacking or missing. Their attempts at implementing new strategising practices were hindered due to a lack of enabling technology. Old technology led to old practices often championed by top management who were set in</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participant 1 criticised the lack of an updated integrated system that enables organisational practices. The respondent also pointed that deep conversation about practices was not taking place:</u></p> <p><i>"Often in [the organisation] things are a bit disjointed. A lot of the stuff is still manually updated. People don't let go. We don't go through phases of analysing what is actually wrong with the organisational practices"</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 6 referred to new practices being implemented to fix old practices without understanding what was fundamentally wrong with the old practices:</u></p> <p><i>"The organisation has a problem of strategic implementation ... as long as the project was planned, that was as if it was completed already! If there were problems with the original plan... it was more</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEWEES RESPONDED TO HOW STRATEGISING PRACTICES WERE CHALLENGING TO IMPLEMENT
<p><b>their ways and not wanting to change.</b></p>	<p><i>interesting to have another new project to fix the old project. We keep starting new strategies again and again, every year, each time requiring a set of new practices.”</i></p> <p>Interview participant 10 highlighted that replace an old practice with a new practice not only required change management principles in this reluctant organisational culture but also required a senior manager to facilitate the change in practices:</p> <p><i>“CEO-5 wanted a dedicated group executive to force [change] through the organisation. Change is hard. This organisation resists change.” – Interview participant 10.</i></p>
<p><b>In direct contrast, some participants reported that there were no challenges with implementing new strategising practices; however, they reflected that change management principles were required to be instilled throughout the organisation.</b></p>	<p>Interview participant 9 was of the opinion that the organisation was over complicating simple processes and basic practices:</p> <p><i>“Strategising practices for a big business are not rocket science. You break them down into projects. The bottom line is the strategising practices today are no different to what was done a year ago. We over-romanticise the strategy. Strategy is fluffy. Turn it into practical applications and break it down to projects.”</i></p>
<p><b>There are those participants who reported that their strategising practices could not be fully realised due to skills shortages as the major challenging issue.</b></p>	<p>Interview participant 13 offered a critique of the external structural issue of skills as impacting on the organisation ability to fully utilise strategising practices:</p> <p><i>“There is a skills shortage in South Africa. We need people with international skills to come here. To play the role of ‘incubators’. Most SA small businesses don’t know the difference between turnover and profit. It is not in their DNA to be corporatised.”</i></p> <p><u>This implied that interview participant 13 strongly felt that formulating and implementing strategising practices was a rare skill in the retail industry and in short supply in the country.</u></p> <p><u>Interview participant 15 also referenced skills but took it further by reflecting on the mismatch of retail skills versus education:</u></p> <p><i>“Skills are a problem. We are over-skilled in history and humanities degrees, but less skilled in</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEWEES RESPONDED TO HOW STRATEGISING PRACTICES WERE CHALLENGING TO IMPLEMENT
	<i>[Mathematics]. There is a mismatch of skills. Our education system does not prepare you for the work environment. Don't get me wrong, people are not at all dumb. Our employees have degrees... [but]... not technical degrees or something I can use to run my division. They are educated, intelligent people, but not skilled in retail..."</i>

#### 5.4.1.3 Findings on organisational norms and praxis as practice themes

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTED A NUMBER OF WAYS TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES
<p>The process that dominated the organisation during the tenure of some of the CEOs was the 'centralisation' of some functions. This event was specifically termed 'centralisation' and was a major disruptor of the business processes at that time. For example, HR function was centralised as Shared Services, the Buying function was centralised, meaning that regions could no longer negotiate on their own with local suppliers. Further, IT joined the overall shared services. This 'centralisation' took over two years to implement.</p> <p>Some participants seemed to have lost hope with the situations within the organisation at that time and the overall direction of the strategy.</p>	<p><u>Interview participant 2 was negative about the centralisation process because it took away from the region their local responsibility and their authority to make merchant decisions. This implied that strategising practices could have been used to streamline certain administrative processes but not to be misused to hinder the entrepreneurial spirit of trading:</u></p> <p><i>"Not everything needs to be centralised. Shared services yes, but not everything."</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 3 was critical on Centralisation and the fact the consultants were brought in from outside:</u></p> <p><i>"Some consultants were from London. They caused us market share and you can't show me what it is that they delivered."</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 4 also criticised the Centralisation process and the consultants that were hired to enforce the centralisation process, something he felt top management could have better implemented themselves:</u></p> <p><i>"The culture has been changed by Centralisation and by us trying to be add more professionalism. But this is an entrepreneurial company. People stayed because we had family values and we allowed them to take ownership of their areas of responsibility. We trusted homegrown talent back then. But the consultants and strategists that they employed was a mistake. There is</i></p>



SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTED A NUMBER OF WAYS TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES
	<p><i>now a gap of over 8% (market share) between us and the competition because of this mistake. The consultants cost us a lot of money. The strategists cost us money. But we can't see what they actually delivered. 'Centralisation', as designed by the consultants – was a loss making initiative. Not sure..."</i></p> <p>(This top manager kept shaking his head throughout the interview, almost contradicting his verbal feedback.)</p> <p><u>Other participants went further and suggested that the organisation should have benchmarked processes of its closest retail competitor as suggested by Interview participant 3</u></p> <p><i>"When you don't have the expertise, you are not going to put your business at risk, you will go get the best the world has to offer, especially at top management level"</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 3 suggest centralisation offered opportunities to have better transitive steps within the organisation machinery:</u></p> <p><i>"There should be better planning and better sequencing of major projects, working through each phases systematically, step by step."</i></p> <p><u>This implied that there is a role for strategising practices in being utilised to sequence major projects.</u></p> <p><u>This view was also held by Interview participant 12, implying that discursive practices could be leveraged to improve communication. This implied that the participants sometimes saw that there was a distinction between strategic tools and strategising practices (confirming the literature review).</u></p> <p><i>"We should break strategy into projects. We should clearly differentiate between strategy enabling tools and support systems. And we should have a clearly distinguishable implementation plan"- Interview participant 9.</i></p>
<p><b>Some interview participants choose to default back into the settings of the founder's values and the principles to try improve the current state of the organisation. The founder's values were used to</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participant 1 showed little confidence with the recent developments in the organisation. They had been employed a long time in the organisation and still revered the 'old days' when the legacy was set:</u></p> <p><i>"The organisation should go back to the original principles."</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTED A NUMBER OF WAYS TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES
<p><b>start the business over 50 years ago.</b></p>	<p><u>This view was echoed by both Interview participant 4 and Interview participant 8, who both concurred that:</u></p> <p><i>“We should go back to the family values and ethos of Mr. A. (founder).”</i></p> <p><u>Implying that not only strategising practices were required to correct the current state of the organisation but values too. This view is linked to organisational norms.</u></p> <p>This is discussed further in the recommendations chapter in that more research on the impact of strategising practices on organisational values was necessary.</p>

#### 5.4.1.4 Findings on context-specific socialisation strategising practices

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED ON THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT STRATEGISING PRACTICES
<p><b>The organisation is undergoing change and transformation, which is in direct opposition with the old organisational culture. There have been voluntary severance packages (VSP) offered to all employees, in attempts to reduce costs.</b></p> <p><b>Change management principles and the pace of change required are being quickly integrated as the retail environment forces adaptation in the organisations in order to survive.</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participants 1 reflected on the reasons why change and transformation was required:</u></p> <p><i>“Organisationally there is a performance issue, lack of accountability. Performance scores are relative – we are not paying the best performers more money. There is a silo approach. There is also internal competition amongst the various top managers for resources, talent and performance rewards. This is counterproductive.”</i></p> <p>The issue of counterproductive practices meant that change management was required. This also implied that strategising practices could be used to align the 25 departments in the retail organisation. It is a culture problem, rewarding departments / individuals instead of teams / multifunctional groups.</p> <p><u>This view was also stated by Interview participant 3 who then added:</u></p> <p><i>“There is a culture of poor planning.”</i></p> <p><u>However, Interview participant 7 stated that the new CEO and his new top management have turned the focus to poor performance.</u></p> <p><i>“The places to hide are getting smaller.”</i></p>



SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED ON THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT STRATEGISING PRACTICES
	<p><u>Interview participant 9 warned against increasing the speed of change and transformation, instead advocating for a measured approach:</u></p> <p><i>“The organisation is not fast, but you are not going to find a company with 1 500 stores and 80 000 employees being able to change overnight. But we can bring certain people from outside who can speed in certain areas”</i></p>
<p><b>Some of the participants still held on to past glories and previous successes of the organisation. In their input they have suggested the solution to the current challenges is to revert back to old ways</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participant 11 felt that other top management were holding on the past, holding on to the decentralised model and were reliant too much on the internal resources:</u></p> <p><i>“The culture is so big that it almost breaks this business. There is too much internal ‘in-breeding’. New thinking is required. Most people here are born and bred on the concept of decentralisation [the old organisation]. CEO-5 points out the dominant attitude at this organisation is to panel-beat you as an outsider into the current organisational culture. Discipline is not in the organisation’s DNA. However, the new normal – is stick to the rules. This organisation confuses ‘playing the field’ with a set of rules, as if you are holding them down.” – Interview participant 11.</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 8 subjectively pointed out the internal conflict on modernising the organisational practices:</u></p> <p><i>“The organisation is currently half pregnant – there are some old ways still upheld strongly. And some new ways coming in.”</i></p>
<p><b>How the organisation perceives itself within the South African retail environment is affected by how the top management project themselves. Top management thinking styles and selection of strategising practices could be informing the general culture of the organisation largely.</b></p>	<p>Interview participant 2 contrasted what is happening inside the organisation, how it the organisations culture perceives itself, as compared to the reality of the outside environment:</p> <p><i>“I would not say we are insular but we are definitely not global either. We know our world only. And we have our own speak. The labour turnover in the organisation is low – there is a lot of long ‘Lifers’. If you made it for the first 6 months, then you are here for life. The chairman stressed loyalty. People here just don’t realise the harsh reality of what corporate life is like outside of the organisation. You don’t know what you don’t know. The culture is internally focused.”</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED ON THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT STRATEGISING PRACTICES
	<p><u>Interview participant 10 suggested that there is a way top management could change the culture from being 'insular' to being more progressive:</u></p> <p><i>"If you bring people from outside, they will help break up the existing culture. Which technically means you can start to chip away at current attitude and beliefs, which means you can chip away at culture. We need to bring skills from outside. You don't have to invent here. There is outside thinking required here. Changing practices is not technically difficult, but it is organisationally hard. This is going to be solved by 1) enrolling people in the need for the change, 2) writing the strategy behind it, and 3) getting CEO-5 to buy into the strategy so that it is a directive."</i>(There was a level of scepticism, if not bitterness, in the feedback given by this top manager. He had unexpectedly been moved to another department by CEO-5. It is interesting to note that this respondent placed 'change' before 'direction', i.e. strategy being the reason for changing.)</p>
<p><b>Gender issues are not part of this study, however, in reflecting on the culture, some intimations were made regarding how top management appeared to the rest of the organisation and how this view affected the culture.</b></p>	<p><u>All the participants referred to the "old boys club" – you were either in the club or not. Loyalty was stressed at every point. Interview participant-6 reduced this view:</u></p> <p><i>"There was a strong patriarchal society within this organisation."</i></p> <p>There is irony in this as the respondent was reflecting on "the old boys club"</p>
<p><b>The organisation is currently undergoing scaled retrenchments and right-sizing of the various business units. Employees close to retirement have been offered packages to take earlier retirement. All employees have been engaged in voluntary severance package (VSP) discussions. Some Interview participants took the opportunity to reflect on these current large-scale re-structuring processes</b></p>	<p>Interview participant 12 justified the structural changes as being necessary and reflected on the employee benefits packages:</p> <p><i>"We added too many layers of managers to centralise the business. We need to strip the wood from the trees. Our main competitor is 2% to 3% lower than our wage cost. We have about 1.5% more in benefits than them."</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 13 was rather direct about the ineffective practice of the organisation of allowing some top management to be retained beyond their usefulness. This interviewee did not only want to rely on the re-structuring process but wanted line management to manage poor performance:</u></p> <p><i>"We are all expected to be hands on. There is a belief that everybody deserved a second chance here. But that is why we now have so much deadwood. In order</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED ON THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT STRATEGISING PRACTICES
	<i>to survive, we now need kick out the deadwood. We have been too kind. It is a difficult process. But it must happen."</i>
<b>The organisation is one of a few retail companies that have two strong unions protecting various employees and ensuring their rights. The two unions have been recognised by top management since the apartheid period. The unions are normally engaged in centralised wage bargaining or negotiations. Most participants in this study referenced the disproportionate power that the unions have over the performance of this organisation. Almost all the participants reported that the unions informed the culture of the organisation.</b>	<p><u>Interview participant 15 reflected on the role of the unions during this large scale restructuring process:</u></p> <p><i>"The union is resisting... change, because they still reliant on old relationships forged with previous top management. They have not done restructure at this scale before."</i></p> <p>The following Interview participant 5 focused on the individual [top manager], their leadership skills, their capabilities, management skills shortage and the skills mismatch within the organisation that restructuring tries to address:</p> <p><i>"We need to 1) have a skill alignment process, 2) there is a lack of communication – so improve that, and 3) deal with the unions decisively" – Interview participant 5.</i></p> <p>This focus on the individual employee's view and their skills was extended by Interview participant 15:</p> <p><i>"... We need to manage poor performance, keep a record of it, and manage some people out the business."</i></p>

#### 5.4.1.5 Findings on discursive strategising practices

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED ON HOW THE CURRENT STRATEGY WAS BEING COMMUNICATED AND DISCUSSED
<b>The participants mentioned that better communication of the strategy would help make it realisable. This implied that the current strategy was not understood or clearly communicated in order for top management to gather the required support for its implementation.</b>	<p><i>"The organisation's people do not understand what the end in mind is. So, we need to communicate it. We are taking the strategy and turning it into policy. And making sure that the flow, from an accountability [point of view], who is doing what is happening. But I don't know whether our people understand the strategy, I don't see that people are turning it into workable actions and practices, so that we can monitor whether we are on the right track, whether we are busy with the right things. Or just busy." – Interview participant 1.</i></p> <p><i>"The answers sit within top management themselves. However, their ability to articulate it properly, is where the short coming is." – Interview participant 2.</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED ON HOW THE CURRENT STRATEGY WAS BEING COMMUNICATED AND DISCUSSED
	<p>This is interesting because as top managers, very few of the participants took ownership of the communication failure in the organisation. There is a strong sense that the chairman will step in. The chairman is how the founder of the organisation is referred to. Despite him being retired, there is a sense he is overseeing the top management.</p>
<p><b>Other participants kept the focus on improving how the organisation plans, how it formulates strategy, how it chooses strategising practices.</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participant 3 reflected that there are plans – however they are not ‘better’ plans. There are processes – but these are not ‘sequenced’. There is effort, but it is not ‘professionally executed’, there is an unruliness to the execution of the overall strategy.</u></p> <p><i>“We need to plan better, and have better sequencing and add professionalism to what we do.”</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 8 also stated that there could be improvement in the managing of the execution of plans.</u></p> <p><i>“The implementation phase of strategising needs to be better managed and controlled.”</i></p> <p><u>This view was also held by others, for examples Interview participant 14:</u></p> <p><i>“From the point of view of operations, we need to move away from the organisation’s current model of running the business.”</i></p> <p>However, this view was not consistently held by every respondent.</p>
<p><b>Some of the participants views show that the top management planning skills were overextended. The organisation had allowed multiple initiatives to take place all at the same time. There was no overall plan. There was no sense of having a clear overall strategy, with good plans and stricter administration processes of multiple initiatives in all the various departments.</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participants 9 suggested a simplification of the strategising process:</u></p> <p><i>“We need to break strategy into little parts. Break it down into bite-size chunks. And everything must become project driven. Retail is the same. Break down business model on ‘the how’.”</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED ON HOW THE CURRENT STRATEGY WAS BEING COMMUNICATED AND DISCUSSED
<p><b>The view that the organisation will only succeed by looking back to the original values of the founder is prominent. The supporters of this view do not clearly show how they will keep the organisation updated, modern and relevant with this mind-set.</b></p>	<p>Interview participant 6 conveyed the internal conflict within top management:</p> <p><i>"We have a problem moving away from a family business to a corporate business."</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 13 echoed this view and stated:</u></p> <p><i>"... we need to stick to the organisation's values of a family business."</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 7 contradicted some of the participants focus on previous value system and showed that there was very little post implementation analysis of strategies:</u></p> <p><i>"We don't ask often enough – 'Why did that strategy fail? Did we not follow our own value system?'"</i></p> <p><u>It is worth noting that values are mentioned several times, by different interview participants, including Interview participant 13 who said:</u></p> <p><i>"The organisation's culture is easy. We have common values. And our values drive how we make decisions. And these are family values."</i></p> <p>This is interesting input in that the desire for "fresh talent" contradicts previous negative sentiments about outside consultants and strategists that the organisation had used. It further shows internal conflict between those participants in support of old values and those aspiring for newness and change.</p>
<p><b>The negative sentiments are directly linked with what was originally a key strength of the organisation, of managing talent and promoting people into top management from within.</b></p>	<p>Interview participant 9 showed the internal conflict when top management had to choose between solving a problem by looking internally or appointing external consultants to help top management rationalise through the problems:</p> <p><i>"We believe so strongly in bringing people up through the ranks... We are in danger of being myopic... We know what we know... I am in my twentieth year and some of my colleagues are in their 30<sup>th</sup> year."</i></p> <p><i>"The organisation's culture will benefit from outsiders... We should bring specialist skills with outside thinking, forge a new team, some might be for a short period of time but some you want them to stay – to change the culture is not technically difficult but it is organisationally hard" – Interview participant 9.</i></p> <p><i>"There should be fresh thinking. There should be a clear strategy that is well communicated." – Interview participant 5.</i></p>



SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED ON HOW THE CURRENT STRATEGY WAS BEING COMMUNICATED AND DISCUSSED
	<p><u>This view is supported by Interview participant 11:</u></p> <p><i>“We need new thinking and stop this inbreeding within the organisation.” – Interview participant 11</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 3 had the longest services out of the top management interviewed and defended the method of the internal grooming of top management:</u></p> <p><i>“I have over 40 years’ history with the company. We have always grown our own talent. And it worked. It is only this new CEO who is changing the culture.”</i></p>

#### 5.4.1.6 Findings on organisational norms as strategising practices

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS GAVE FEEDBACK ON HOW THEY WORKED WITH MIDDLE MANAGEMENT AND THEIR OWN TEAMS TO REALISE THE USE OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES
<p><b>The participants opted to identify skills gaps in their respective middle management teams and how they were willing to take action to bridge the gap.</b></p>	<p>Interview participant 4 addressed the issue of bridging the inherent skills gap within the organisation by doing a step by step approach:</p> <p><i>. “We conducted a skills audit. We then identified gaps in individual middle managers. Thereafter we sent some individuals for further executive training.” –</i></p> <p><u>This Interview participant 1 understood “training” to be strategising practice and interestingly referred to the crucial role of middle management play in skills development.</u></p> <p><i>“We expected middle managers to have a systematic approach, as currently there is not as much individual accountability.”</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 3 further supported the above feedback and stated that:</u></p> <p><i>“There is clear targets set for the middle management teams and they have been given areas of responsibility.”</i></p> <p>Interview participant 9 reviewed both top management and middle management roles in delivering strategy:</p> <p><i>“There are 3 things that impact management ability to deliver, so: 1) capability (skills, knowledge – can they do what you want them to do); 2): Do they have the capacity (sometimes they just have too much on their plate – it’s a function of capacity – and, 3): Attitude / (not so much</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS GAVE FEEDBACK ON HOW THEY WORKED WITH MIDDLE MANAGEMENT AND THEIR OWN TEAMS TO REALISE THE USE OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES
	<i>aptitude) if you give people a new task, you want to have people who want to do that."</i>
Some participants wanted to stop outsourcing of some of the functions that could be done by middle management teams. Internal focus could possibly find better solutions or to have better implementation prospects.	<p><u>Interview participant 2 saw value in engaging the top management structure at the organisation to effectively take over from consultant's role:</u></p> <p><i>"The answers sit with top management. [The organisation] management do not have the ability to articulate themselves and ideas, so we incorrectly rely on consultants and outside strategists, to verbalise what we are already thinking anyway."</i></p> <p><u>The following Interview participant 4 contradicted the importance of consultants and other feedback related to outsourcing 'thinking' and stated categorically that:</u></p> <p><i>"There is expertise internally."</i></p> <p>There seems to be conflict / tension about sufficient internal expertise vs fresh ideas, possibly implying a lack of reflection in their roles as top managers.</p>

#### 5.4.1.7 Findings on praxis as strategising practices

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS BENCHMARKED THE ORGANISATIONS CURRENT ABILITIES (RBV)
Some of the participants linked the inherent skills within their team with the perceived gaps to be bridged in order to realise the current strategy. In their answers, some of the participants covered the basic retail functions of shops, merchandise, layout design, supply chain, promotional activity and support functions. They also covered basic management functions.	<p>Interview participant 1 confirmed that the middle management team had the prerequisite skills for basic retail however an evolution of the market has necessitated the need to upgrade:</p> <p><i>"There is some capability and some strength within the team. But the function has evolved. So there is a lot of upskilling required."</i></p> <p><u>This view was seconded by Interview participant 3 who stated that,</u></p> <p><i>"The current skills are only sometimes matched to the job and the work load."</i></p> <p><u>The following Interview participant 11 insisted that bridging the retail skills gap is not that difficult:,</u></p> <p><i>"We can build a bridge by how we structure our people based on how we use of the current skills to close this gap."</i></p>

SYNTHESIS OF THESE CHOICES OF STRATEGISING PRACTICES	INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS BENCHMARKED THE ORGANISATIONS CURRENT ABILITIES (RBV)
	<p>The skills gap was a recurring theme in the feedback and it is covered in the recommendation section both for future research and for management to address.</p>
<p><b>Self-doubt was prevalent in the organisation, a sense of consultants and outsiders knowing more about the organisation than the top managers did.</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participant 2 contextualised the distrust of consultants:</u></p> <p><i>“There is a strong element of distrusting our own people’s ideas. We think management are behind the curve. That our operations are old fashioned. That the outsiders know more than us.”</i></p> <p><u>In concurrence, Interview participant-7 stated and reflected on the opportunity cost of outsiders:</u></p> <p><i>“Taking too many consultants and experts is too expensive in any case”.</i></p>
<p><b>There was also a general sense that the organisation was slow, lethargic, lost in past success, under-performing due to a sense of entitlement by “Lifers” (a term used to describe longevity of top managers in their positions) and a general sense that there is laziness at various levels of the organisation.</b></p>	<p><u>Interview participant 5 suggested that natural attrition (or labour turnover) within top management and middle management should be embraced within the organisation. And those remaining should shoulder the extra responsibilities without complaining:</u></p> <p><i>“I believe in turning your resources. They need to earn their keep. They need to have full day’s work.”</i></p> <p><u>Interview participant 13 indicated a level of dissatisfaction with the knowledge levels or expertise of some of the middle management:</u></p> <p><i>“Their knowledge is satisfactory but not adequate. There is deadwood within the organisation... people not doing their share of work”</i></p> <p><i>“I am quite fortunate that I have a small enough team but very effective. So, I am able to implement the strategy. I have one or two individuals that are weak on the team. But I am busy with poor performance issues there.” Interview participant 14.</i></p> <p>(It eventually took this top manager over 18 months to finally demote and move the individual mentioned. The individual was a poor performer and was moved to a lower position. It could have been done sooner, as the company HR policy makes allowance for demotion and restructuring to take effect within 3 months).</p>

In summary, the above section presented a brief review of how top management viewed the organisation through the prism of strategising practices. The following



section reviews the kind of thinking styles that informed the choice of these strategising practices. There have been shifts in the choice of strategising practices during the past 15 years at the retail organisation. The shift was heralded by each new chief executive as the most senior representative of the top managers, who led the rest of the management team in selecting specific strategising practices and influencing their thinking styles.

## 5.5 QUALITATIVE DATA ON STRATEGISING PRACTICES

The following section starts with a numeric review of the strategising practices. This is followed by a presentation of the findings on the thinking styles.

### 5.5.1 Qualitative findings on strategising practices

The interview participants identified the strategising practices that they used. The list is based on the literature review in Chapter 2. The participants ranked their strategising practices based on the frequency of use. The seven main themes were: 1) episodic practices, 2) material practices, 3) artefacts, 4 praxis), 5) organisational norms, 6) context-specific socialisation, and 7) discursive practices as the main themes of practices in this study.

Table 5.12 shows that these practices were ranked in order of importance based on the frequency of use. The top three practices were identified as praxis with 21% (7 out of 32 cases), context-specific socialisation practices with 21% (7 out of 32 cases) and episodic practices with 18% (6 out of 32 cases). The lowest score recorded was for organisational norms with 6% (2 out of 32 cases).

**Table 5.12: Interviewees on the strategising practices**

PLEASE LIST THE VARIOUS STRATEGISING PRACTICES THAT YOU USE ON A REGULAR BASIS				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Praxis*	7	21.2	21.9
	Context*	7	21.2	21.9
	Episodic	6	18.2	18.8
	Discursive	4	12.1	12.5

	Material	3	9.1	9.4
	Artefacts	3	9.1	9.4
	Organisational*	2	6.1	6.3
	Total	32	97.0	100.0
<b>Missing</b>	No response	1	3.0	
<b>Total n</b>		33	100.0	

\*Highest scores. Lowest score highlighted

The statistical findings regarding the strategising practices for the quantitative aspect of the study showed that praxis was the most-used practice and organisational norms scored the lowest. Outliers may have influenced the mean and the standard deviation, as they are data values that differ vastly from the rest of the data set.

The following section provides a review of the statistics of the thinking styles that the interviews participants reported on.

### 5.5.2 Qualitative - participants' perceptions on situational thinking

The interviews participants communicated that their identified thinking style did not remain the same from situation to situation within their retail environmental realities. They reported that their thinking styles differed depending on the severity of the situation they faced. They also reported that their identified thinking style changed when they were in a group situation.

**Interview participant (IP)-16** did not differ from the organisation and did not want to be categorised by one thinking style and argued, *“I have experience all these thinking styles at some point in my career, Currently I’d say my dominant thinking style is aligned to following organisational rules – whichever of these best represents that will be my thinking style.”*

**IP-1** took a personal reflection perspective and stated that his thinking styles changed, based on his emotions, *“My thinking style depends on what mood I am in, good mood*

*or bad mood. That's not very scientific but this is the reality of retail management. So, I identify with at least two of thinking styles on this list."*

**IP-25** was defensive about his selection of thinking styles and proposed, *"I have always positioned myself that I have got more than one option. My frame of reference is such that I can almost do any job in retail. I can adapt my thinking style to each situation, because I use my emotional intelligence and because I know myself."*

**IP-15** experienced more than one reality and counter argued as follows: *"I do not like any one of these options of thinking styles. The list is limited. But the closest styles for me are a combination of Internal, Hierarchical and Executive thinking style."*

The collected data from the interviews showed that there were three different scenarios that influenced what thinking styles participants applied per scenario:

The top managers' 'dominant style' or default thinking style used for day-to-day functions or for "how things are done at the retail organisation";

- Their thinking styles changed during a crisis when they needed to make decisions quickly, where there was limited information in a pressurised environment; and
- The style of thinking that was prevalent in the company that formed part of what the participants called group think.

The results and scores indicated that the choice of thinking styles narrows during a crisis and widens when the participants considered the organisational style. The dominant style (normal way of doing things at the organisation) is in direct opposition with the organisation's style (how group thinking prevailed over individual thinking styles).

Each of these thinking styles is reviewed separately in the section below in order to track the emergent patterns as each impacts the choice of strategising practices.

Table 5.13 shows that the dominant thinking styles narrowed down from the original number of 13 subscales to 10 (or 10 out of the 13 TSI styles). The participants did not select the external thinking styles in their 'dominant' situation when top management

were dealing with normal day-to-day operations that are when the “how we do things here” mentality applied.

The results indicated that the executive thinking style (21% or 7 out of 33 cases) was most commonly used, followed by the hierarchical thinking style (15% or 5 out of 33 cases). The oligarchic and local thinking styles had the lowest use, both at 3%.

**Table 5.13: Dominant thinking during normal operations**

<b>DOMINANT THINKING DURING NORMAL OPERATIONS</b>				
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	Executive*	7	21.2	21.2
	Hierarchical	5	15.2	15.2
	Legislative	4	12.1	12.1
	Internal	4	12.1	12.1
	Global	4	12.1	12.1
	Liberal	3	9.1	9.1
	Conservative	2	6.1	6.1
	Judicial	2	6.1	6.1
	Oligarchic*	1	3.0	3.0
	Local*	1	3.0	3.0
	Total	33	100.0	100.0

*\*Highest score: Lowest scores highlighted*

Table 5.14 reflects on how the inverse happens when participants thinking styles change during a ‘crisis’, and the TSI range is further narrowed down to only eight subscales (8 out of 13).

The following five thinking styles were not selected to address a ‘crisis’ at the retail organisation:

- Monarchic (singular focus) – the exclusion could mean multiple focuses are required during a crisis;

- Internal (working independently) – the exclusion could mean that team effort is required to solve a crisis;
- Global (abstract ideas) – the exclusion could mean only factual and practical concepts are required to resolve a crisis;
- Anarchic (no systems) – the exclusion could mean that systematic thinking is required to distil the issues related to the crisis; and
- Oligarchic (no priorities) – the exclusion could mean that within multiple objectives during a crisis, priorities still need to be set.

The findings show that the hierarchical thinking style at 36% is the most selected during a crisis, followed by the executive style at 18%. The lowest selected thinking styles during a crisis styles were Legislative and Judicial.

**Table 5.14: Thinking during a crisis event**

THINKING STYLES DURING A CRISIS EVENT				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Hierarchical*	12	36.4	36.4
	Executive	6	18.2	18.2
	Liberal	4	12.1	12.1
	Conservative	4	12.1	12.1
	Local	3	9.1	9.1
	External	2	6.1	6.1
	Legislative*	1	3.0	3.0
	Judicial*	1	3.0	3.0
	Total	33	100.0	100.0

*\*Highest score: Lowest scores highlighted*

Table 5.15 shows how the findings relate to the way the organisation thinks. The participants communicated that when they were together, their thinking changed, and groupthink took over where they adopted similar thinking styles. The top three thinking styles were conservative (18%), executive (18%) and anarchic (15%). This range expanded to eleven (11 out of the 13 TSI) thinking styles.

**Table 5.15: Thinking when grouped at an organisational level**

GROUP THINKING AT AN ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	
Valid	Conservative*		6	18.2	18.2
	Executive*		6	18.2	18.2
	Anarchic	5	15.2	15.2	
	Internal	4	12.1	12.1	
	Global	3	9.1	9.1	
	Judicial	3	9.1	9.1	
	Oligarchic	2	6.1	6.1	
	Liberal*		1	3.0	3.0
	External*		1	3.0	3.0
	Monarchic*		1	3.0	3.0
	Local*		1	3.0	3.0
	Total		33	100.0	100.0

*\*Highest scores: Lowest scores highlighted*

In order to highlight further how the list of thinking styles change:

- Under a dominant situation: mostly hierarchical and executive styles are selected.
- Under a crisis: mostly hierarchical and executive styles are selected.
- In an organisational groupthink situation: mostly executive and conservative styles are selected. However, it is interesting to note that hierarchical style was not selected in this situation.

Table 5.16, Table 5.17 and Table 5.18, show the cross-tabulation in detail for dominant thinking, crisis thinking and organisational thinking. These tables show the notable changes that took place when the organisation was faced with various situations, as the top management thinking styles changed to align with the necessary environment and situation.

Table 5.16: Cross-tabulation of the three lists with strategising practices

DOMINANT THINKING * STRATEGISING PRACTICES CROSS-TABULATION									
		Material	Episodic	Praxis	Context	Organisational	Artefacts	Discursive	
Thinking	Liberal	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
	Conservative	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
	Hierarchical*	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	5
	Legislative	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
	Executive*	1	0	0	4	0	2	0	7
	Internal	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	4
	Global	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	4
	Judicial	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
	Oligarchic*	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Local*	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		3	6	7	7	2	3	4	32

\*Highest scores. Lowest scores highlighted



Table 5.17: Cross-tabulation of the three lists with strategising practices

CRISIS THINKING * STRATEGISING PRACTICES CROSS-TABULATION									
		Material	Episodic	Praxis	Context	Organisational	Artefacts	Discursive	Total
Thinking	Liberal	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
	Conservative	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
	External	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
	Hierarchical*	3	3	2	0	0	2	2	12
	Legislative*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Executive*	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	5
	Judicial*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Local	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Total		3	6	7	7	2	3	4	32

\*Highest scores. Lowest scores highlighted

Table 5.18: Cross-tabulation of the three lists with strategising practices

ORGANISATIONAL THINKING * STRATEGISING PRACTICES CROSS-TABULATION									
		Material	Episodic	Praxis	Context	Organisational	Artefacts	Discursive	Total
Thinking	Local*	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Oligarchic	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
	Anarchic*	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	5
	Judicial	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
	Global	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
	Internal	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	4
	Executive*	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	6
	Monarchic*	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	External*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Conservative*	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	6
	Liberal*	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total		3	6	7	7	2	3	4	32

\*Highest scores. Lowest scores highlighted

The following section combines the data from the quantitative method (questionnaire) and data from the qualitative method (interview) in order to create a profile of the top managers at the retail organisation.

## **5.6 THE PROFILE OF TOP MANAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS**

In the study, a profile of the overlap between the thinking styles and strategising practises of top managers were created. The profiles presented are specific to the research respondents and participants and the case retail organisations. The representations merely show the observed overlap and are neither a comparison nor a correlational analysis.

### **5.6.1 Survey respondents profile (Quantitative data)**

The respondents (n=79) to the online questionnaire did not have the option to reflect on their thinking styles under the three different situations identified in the previous section (dominant, crisis and organisational). The survey they completed had 104 questions that required the respondents to answer. Their answer selection allowed an analysis of their thinking styles, which were classified using the 13 styles as per TSI. The results of that analysis, using the SPSS, were termed as the “normal” day-to-day operational thinking style of the case organisation.

Table 5.19 is an attempt to answer the research question RQ3: Is there a rapport between the thinking styles and the strategising practices, as commonly used by top managers at the case organisation? In Table 5.19, a participant profile is proposed by looking for any relationship between top management strategising practices and their thinking styles using the mean scores.

In this study, the mean score of 4.00 represents a neutral outcome, meaning the subscales selected close to this number are were considered to have a weaker relationship than those with higher mean scores.

In Table 5.19, the lowest mean was registered for organisational norms as strategising practices (4.17).

This could be interpreted in a number of ways. For example: This low mean for Organisational norms could imply that participants at the case organisation did not prioritise time on the following practices:

The managing of the general behaviour of the employees in the organisation by vocally championing the case organisations values and principles. Instead, there is a culture that supersedes individual champions of values. This is confirmed by Interview participant (IP)=13 who stated that: *“The dominant culture of the organisation overrules everything. It changes how you, as an individual, actually think. The culture is just too big. It almost breaks the organisation. But we don’t talk about this. It is taboo to be seen to even challenge the ethos of the founder.”*

- Top management possibly do not encourage open discussion or use open forums to talk about the problems in the organisation, (by way of confirmation, none of the interview participants referred to any open forums). However, IP-15 highlighted the role of unions:

*“The union is ... reliant on old relationships forged with previous top management.”*

- They possibly held few meaningful organisation wide conversations that would take place as part of change management principles. This was confirmed by IP-10 who stated that:

*“Change is hard. This organisation resists change. And when we have to change – no-one sells the idea well enough for everyone to understand why we need to change and to get buy in from everyone.”*

The findings on organisational norms as strategising practices not often applied is another important finding of this study as it confirms the feedback from participants that there has been an inhibiting thinking style in the organisation, which impacted the performance. This is further supported by the outcome of the interview analysis completed in Section 5.3. The highest mean overall was for artefacts (5.93) as strategising practices, which was preferred by participants using the hierarchical thinking style, followed by the liberal style. The pattern of hierarchical thinking style, followed by liberal, holds for each of the seven practices and re-confirms the profile of the retail organisation. This means that wherever hierarchical thinking applied, liberal thinking closely followed it.

Table 5.19 shows the TSI was used to review which practices were most associated with which thinking style. When all the means under each strategising practice were averaged out the highest mean was found for material practices (5.13). The implication was that participants spent a substantial amount of time with tools such as computers and cell phones, physical objects such as utensils, stationery and whiteboards, documents such as spreadsheets and reports, communication tools such as emails and short message systems. The participants used artefacts (4.88) in the same manner and the episodic (4.87) practices, as the top three practices.

**Table 5.19: Profile D - Top managers' thinking styles and strategising practices**

		Artefacts	Context	Discursive	Episodic	Material	Organisational norms	Praxis	Average
Liberal	Mean	5.68	5.18	5.19	5.53	5.53	4.95	5.33	5.34
Conservative	Mean	4.32	3.55	3.48	4.28	4.71	3.60	4.13	4.01
External	Mean	5.45	4.73	5.19	5.29	5.42	4.90	5.29	5.18
Monarchic	Mean	4.43	4.40	4.10	4.36	4.95	3.43	4.44	4.30
Hierachical	Mean	5.93	5.33	5.23	5.56	5.80	5.33	5.46	5.52
Legislative	Mean	5.29	4.95	5.75	5.22	5.46	4.80	5.21	5.24
Executive	Mean	5.39	4.48	4.67	4.94	5.42	4.25	5.25	4.91
Internal	Mean	3.84	4.23	5.02	4.40	4.52	3.60	4.10	4.24
Global	Mean	4.20	4.08	4.83	4.42	4.79	3.28	4.65	4.32
Judical	Mean	5.16	4.73	4.73	5.15	5.01	4.40	4.90	4.87
Anarchic	Mean	4.63	4.88	5.10	5.08	5.14	3.85	4.69	4.77
Oligarchic	Mean	4.45	4.08	4.48	4.23	4.79	3.53	4.19	4.25
Local	Mean	4.70	4.48	4.94	4.83	5.13	4.25	4.65	4.71
	Avearge	4.88	4.54	4.82	4.87	5.13	4.17	4.79	

Figure 5.7 shows the highest means of the two thinking styles (hierarchical 5.52, liberal 5.34) in comparison to the means of the lowest scored thinking styles (conservative 4.01, internal 4.24). This is another perspective on the data, to compare how the top two thinking styles differed to the lowest mean scored thinking styles. This perspective was to see if any new insights could be observed to looking at thinking styles at opposite ends of the scales compare to each other:

- What it does show is that the gap is narrowest when it comes to the Discursive strategising practices for styles in particular - Liberal thinking, Hierarchical thinking and Internal thinking styles.
- This could imply that there is deep alignment between top managers with these three specific thinking styles when it comes to strategic conversation.
- However, a critical discourse analysis would be required to confirm what these managers are in conversation about or if it has impact on the direction of the overall strategy at the case organisation.

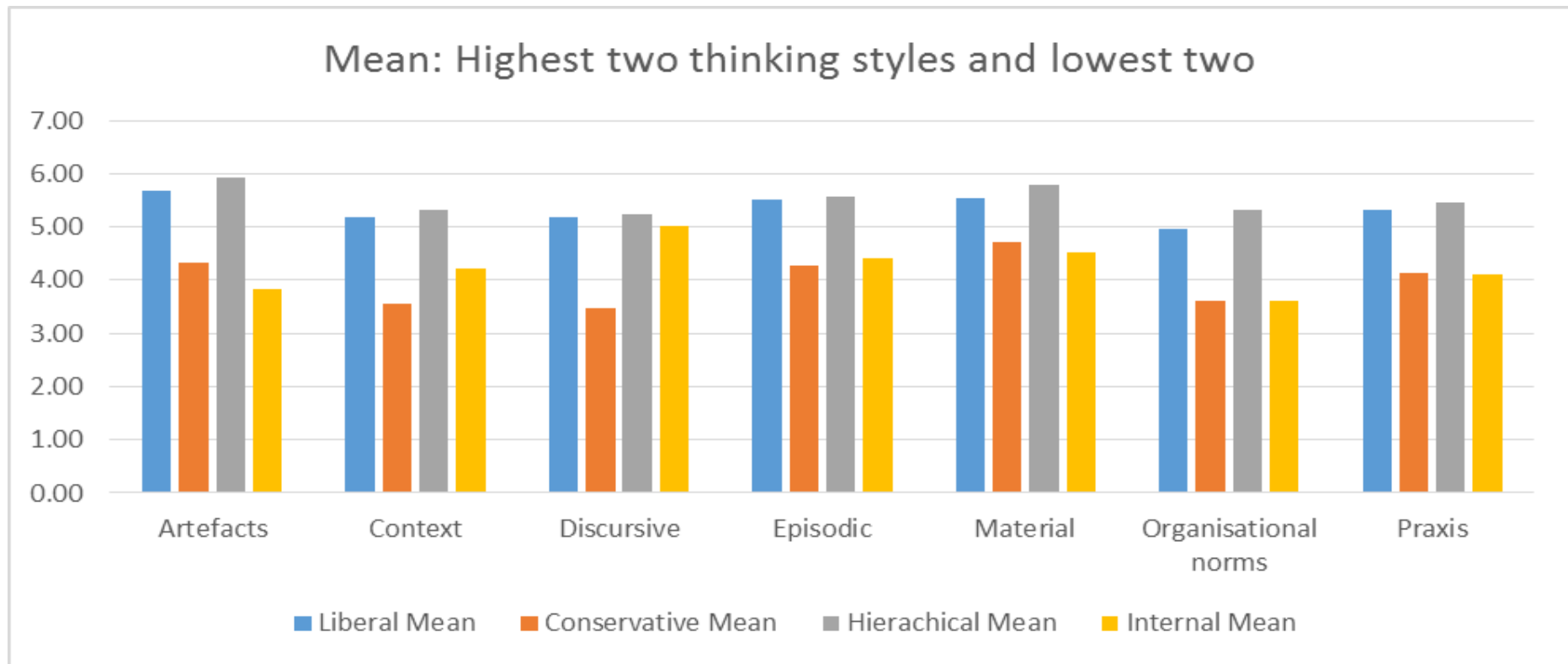
The Internal thinking style and Conservative have similar scores when it comes to the application of organisational norms and praxis, with discursive practices having the biggest difference. The participants who mostly applied the Liberal thinking style and the Hierarchical thinking style dominated; the Liberal thinking style and Hierarchical trend in a consistent manner across all strategising practices, implying that the overall profile of the organisation.

The association between the Hierarchical thinking style and Material strategising practices, closely followed by the Episodic practices, is an important finding of this study, as these two strategising practices feature several times throughout the data analysis:

- This information is triangulated across the qualitative data and the quantitative data to reconfirm what the profile of the organisation is. It also attempts to address the research question RQ3, which is listed as: Is there a rapport between the thinking styles and the strategising practices, as commonly used by top managers at the case organisation?

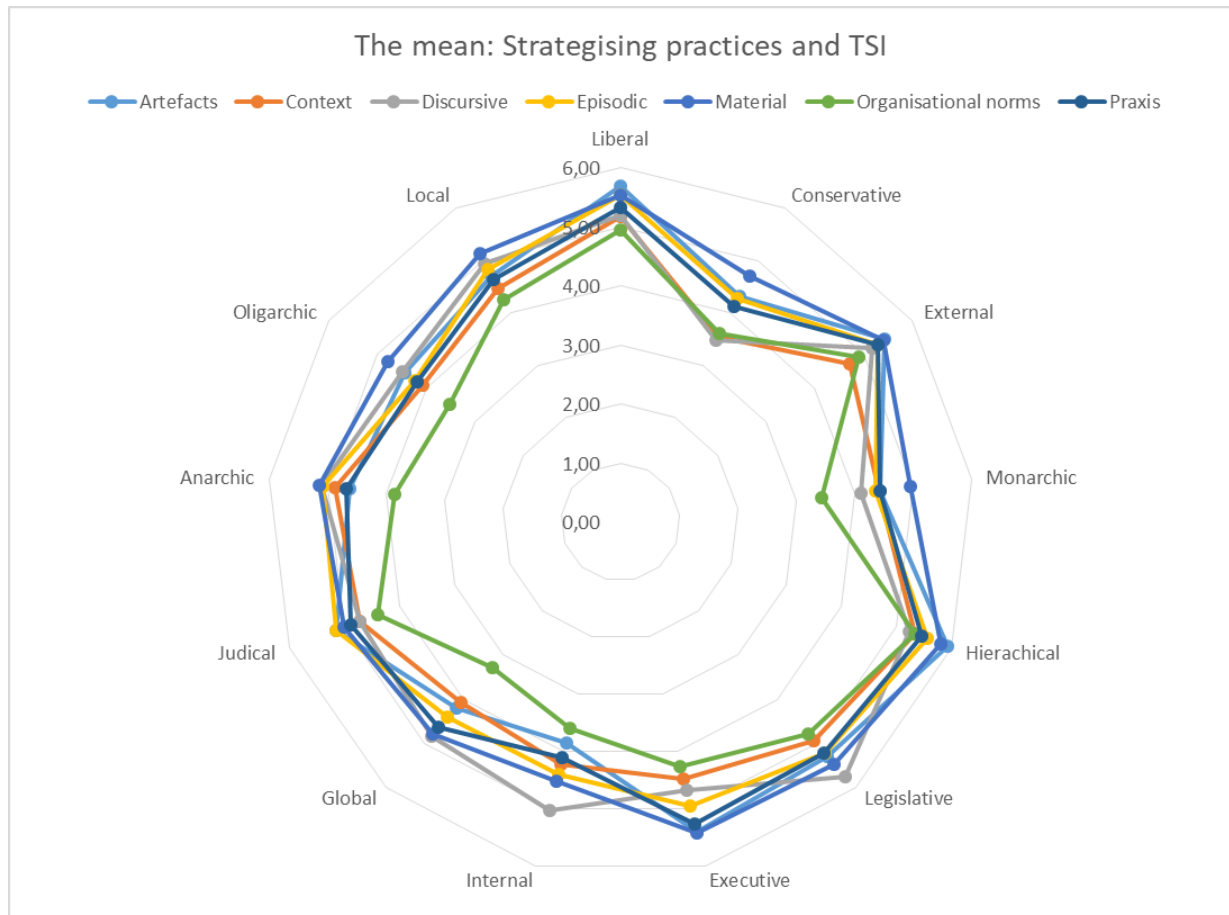
- To answer this question RQ3, the Hierarchical thinking selection of Material practices and Episodic practices was the most notable trend in the study implying a tentative relationship, if not some rapport between the units of observation.





**Figure 5.7: Profile on top management respondent's use of strategising practices (TSI)**

Figure 5.8 is a summary of the respondents' views on thinking styles and strategising practices, using the mean as the continuous variable. This figure is a profile of the top management respondents at the retail organisation and could be used to recruit complementary skills.



**Figure 5.8: Profile summary of top management respondents practices and thinking**

### 5.6.2 Interview participant profile (qualitative)

In the initial stage of the interview process and data collection, the participants were frustrated that the TSI list of the 13 possible thinking styles was limited considering the retail industry. The participants indicated they would select more than one singular thinking style to try deal with the various situations they find at the case organisation.

Interview participant (IP-2) - reflecting on change in thinking styles:

*“This list (TSI) is not right. The world is not black and white... there is a shift in emphasis every time with every situation... and for a limited period of time. You need clarity of thinking for each situation. And I would not think the same every time.”*

IP-25 reflected on the fast-paced retail environment and ever-changing situations requiring practical thinking styles:

*“Retail is fast but also practical. These thinking styles (TSI) need to be more operationally slanted and have more of a practical application. You can’t be Global here. Retail is not rocket science. You need to be realistic.”*

IP-2 asked,

*“I have done psychometric tests before that the organisation does for the senior managers. So, shouldn’t this list (TSI) be more like the Myers-Brigg Type indicator that we have done before, where you have more than one option to choose from?”*

During the course of the interviews, it became apparent that interview participants experienced three distinct modes of thinking while strategising. The various feedback from different interview participants could be distilled into three different situations:

- Dominant (when normal day-to-day operations were in effect);
- Crisis (when there was external pressure affecting normal operations); and
- Organisational (group thinking expected at an organisational level).

Each of these three situations is discussed in the following section. Firstly, the qualitative data that was collected during the interview process as part of the narrative

is introduced. Secondly, the top three thinking styles alongside the top three strategising practices are listed. Thirdly, the highest ranked thinking styles are shown in a figurative form illustrating all of its respective strategising practices in the order of priority.

#### **5.6.2.1 Dominant thinking style (qualitative)**

Interview participant (IP)-18 – reflecting on their own Dominant thinking stated the following:

*“My default style is this one (selects Executive thinking style). I do things differently when there are no fires to put out.”*

Another respondent reflected differently on their Dominant thinking style - IP-15 stated that:

*“I like to think this is my thinking style (selects Internal thinking style). But only when I am in a good mood. But if I am not, like when there is pressure or deadlines or I need to get the team to deliver under extreme circumstances, then it changes to this one (selects Global thinking style)”*

In the Table 5.20, the top three thinking styles under a dominant situation, where normal day-to-day operation prevails are the Executive thinking style, the Internal style and the Global thinking styles. The fact that there are some common practices among the top three thinking styles, for example discursive practice, could imply that conversations at a strategic level are being utilised to realise strategy. The frequency of Episodic practices could imply that under normal day-to-day operations, participants utilise the episodes of meeting to co-ordinate tasking and strategising practices. This matches “good meeting practices”, as espoused by Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) The Internal thinking style and Global thinking style have the same set strategising practices, however, their ranking of practices differs, which could possibly result in the following scenarios:

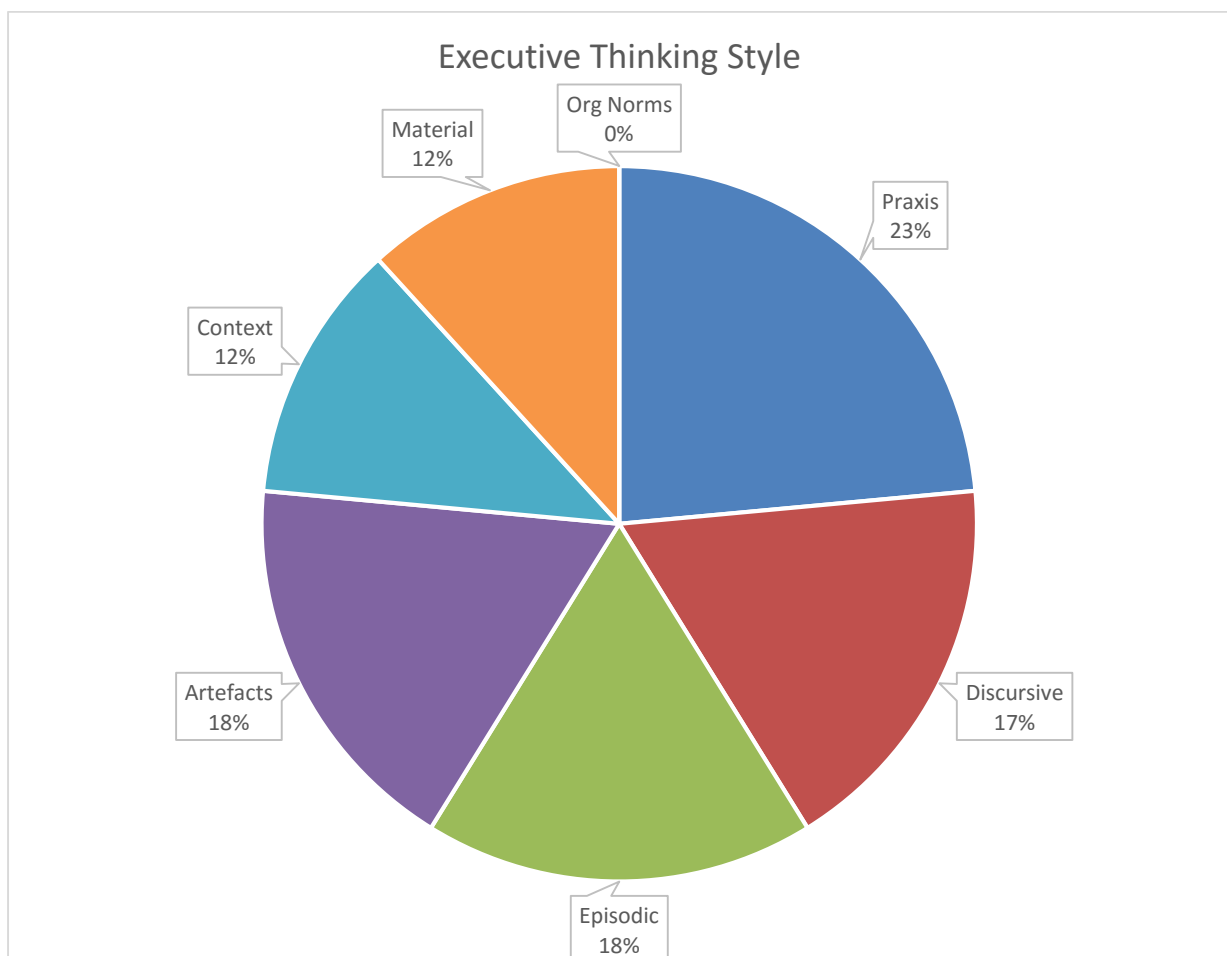
- Top management participants who prefer the Internal thinking styles could be using the structures of meetings (episodic) to engage in deep conversation (discursive) about creating meaning (context) behind their strategies.

- On the other hand, Global thinkers among participants could be seeking deep conversation (discursive) and seeking strategic meaning (context) outside of the formal structure of a meeting (episodic).

**Table 5.20: Top three thinking styles and the respective strategising practices -Dominant**

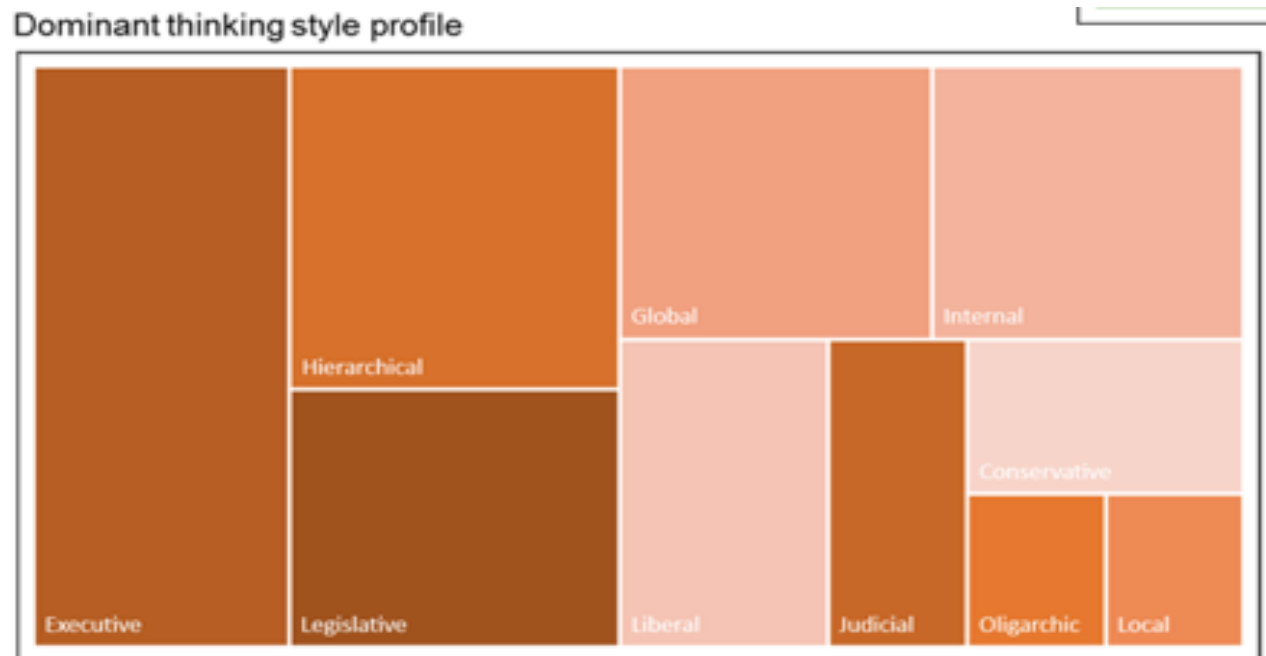
	Qualitative top three Thinking styles – Dominant situation		
	1 <sup>st</sup> - Executive	2 <sup>nd</sup> – Internal	3 <sup>rd</sup> - Global
Top three Strategising practices	Praxis 24%	Episodic 29%	Discursive 33%
	Discursive 18%	Discursive 14%	Context 22%
	Episodic 18%	Context 14%	Episodic 22%

Figure 5.9 shows the executive thinking styles with all the studies strategising practices listed the most selected by the Executive thinking style being praxis at 23%.



**Figure 5.9: Qualitative – Executive thinking style and practices (Dominant)**

Another perspective of the data on the dominant thinking is present as Figure 5.10. The data indicated will be used in part in the building of the profile of participants at the case organisation at the end of this chapter.



**Figure 5.10: Perspective of Top thinking style (Dominant)**

### 5.6.2.2 Crisis thinking styles (qualitative)

The interviews participants reflected that the case organisation has had a number of crisis in the last 15 years, where they thought that the focus of top management was singular and driven to resolving the problem at that time. Interview participant (IP)-1 – reflecting on a crisis, confirmed the following:

*“When there is a crisis, we don’t have the luxury to be democratic, decisions must be made... and fairly quickly. My thinking changes. Our thinking change.”*

Other participants did not focus on big organisational events, rather on their own department work where more than one style of thinking was required. Reflecting on their duality on thinking, IP-2 said:

*“Do I just have to pick one style? I have more than one thinking style... for instance when there is an emergency. There are always emergencies in my department.”*

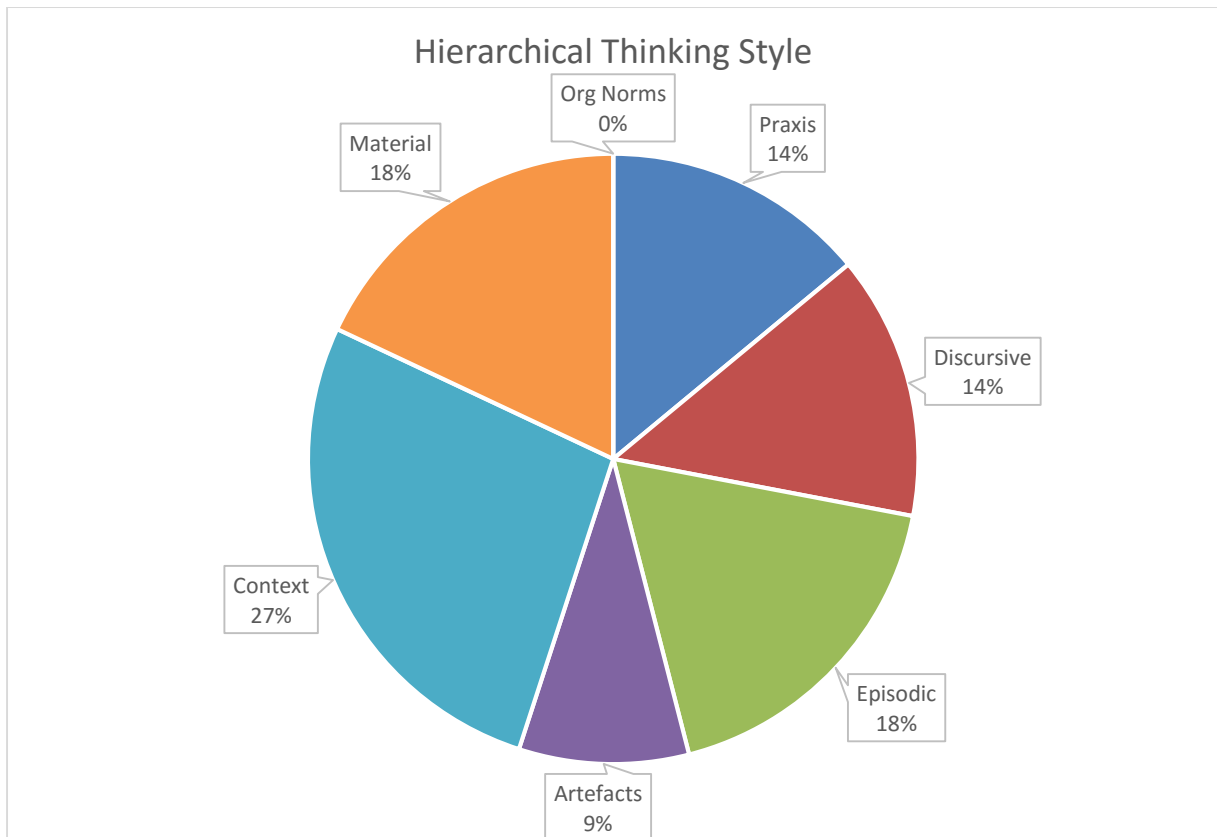
Table 5.21 is the listing of the top three thinking styles during a crisis and their respective strategising practices. There is not one common strategising practices across the top three thinking styles during a crisis. The organisation defaults to material practices and praxis to try solve problems. Organisational norms feature strongly as some interview participants often referred back to historical great moments in the organisation. The organisation legacy and previous leaders were often quoted as people “who could get us out of this mess we are in now.” The capacity to deal with organisational wide crisis seems to be limited to doing what worked before.

The high ranking of context socialisation practices is notable as it indicates that participants would first seek to understand the crisis in the context of the impact on the organisation and how previously similar problems have been addressed.

**Table 5.21: Top three thinking styles and the respective strategising practices - Crisis**

	Qualitative top three thinking styles – Crisis situation		
	1 <sup>st</sup> - Hierarchical	2 <sup>nd</sup> – Executive	3 <sup>rd</sup> – Liberal
Top three strategising practices	Context 27%	Episodic 24%	Context 18%
	Episodic 18%	Discursive 18%	Organisational norms 18%
	Material 18%	Praxis 18%	Praxis 18%

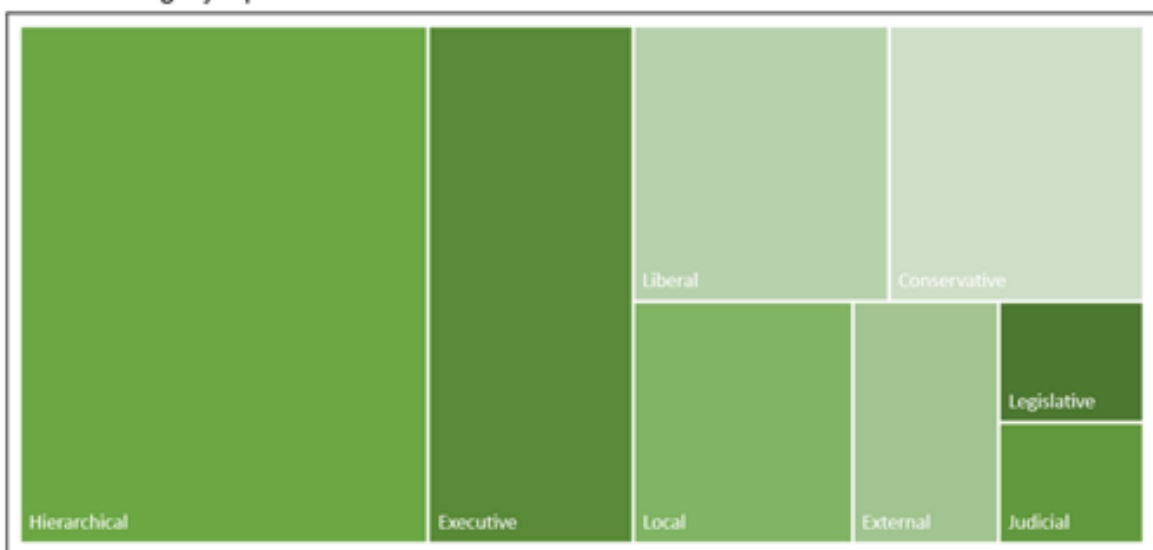
Figure 5.11 shows the Hierarchical thinking styles with all the studies strategising practices listed. The most selected by Hierarchical thinking style is Context socialisation practices at 27%. Organisational norms only featured with Liberal thinking styles. Praxis features as strategising practices, which could imply that during a crisis, participants look for practical solutions to the problem they are faced with at that moment.



**Figure 5.11: Qualitative – Hierarchical thinking style and practices (Crisis)**

Another perspective of the data on the crisis thinking is present as Figure 5.12. The data are presented as a subset of the profile that will be developed.

**Crisis thinking style profile**



**Figure 5.12: Perspective of Top thinking style (Crisis)**



The following section is the last grouping of thinking styles under the situation of group, the Organisation thinking style where group thinking is required.

#### **5.6.2.3      Organisational group thinking style (qualitative)**

During the interview process, the participants all reflected on the specific culture at the organisation as overwhelming.

Interview participant (IP)-14 – reflecting on Organisational thinking:

*“The organisation likes to get people from outside to influence the inside thinking. But when they get here, it knocks them down. They culturally panel beats them into shape; it forces them to do things the way that they have always been done here.”*

IP-25 - reflecting on organisational thinking,

*“South African executives are not as exposed as European executives – the overseas guy’s frame of reference is much broader because they are exposed to more careers in different companies. And shorter tenures. They tend to be more diverse – not culturally, but I mean organisationally.”*

IP-9 – reflected on being an outsider at top management level, and lamented the fact that all his colleagues have only ever been at the case organisation:

*“I don’t think like everyone else here. And I have worked for more than one company, unlike some senior managers here. So, I don’t associate myself with the organisational thinking of ‘here’. And I have the battle scars to show for it. The organisation keeps falling back to old ways here, they can’t handle change here. There is a way of thinking and doing things that is just done here. Regardless of what change you bring along.”*

IP-13 - reflecting on the organisation environment, stated:

*“The dominant culture of the organisation overrules everything. It changes how you, as an individual, actually think. The culture is just too big. It almost breaks the organisation.”*

IP-12 stated that,

*“When we get together as executives, as a group, we align our thinking. There is no space for individuality at board level. There must be concurrence. Look - you are allowed to have your opinion, but the board is one entity.”*

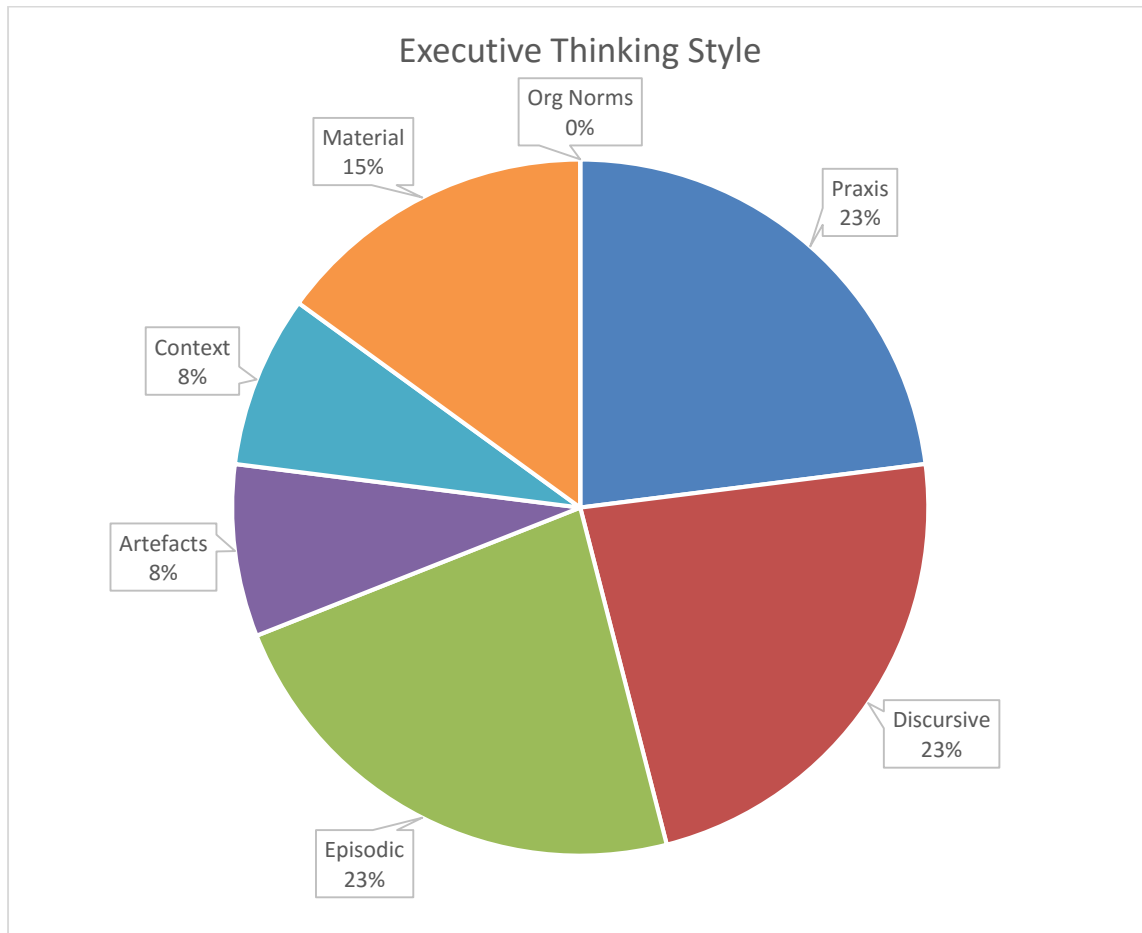
The preceding comments and quotes, lead into a review of Table 5.22 that indicates the group think as exemplified by the Organisational thinking style. The only common strategising practice across the top three thinking styles is Discursive practices, which may highlight incidental critical discourse analysis as unintentionally conducted by top management at the case organisation. This analysis works closely with context-specific socialisation practices as indicated in the second and third thinking styles. This may indicate that in order to align their thinking and their efforts from their respective divisions, top management may negotiate for their resources and may compromise through active engagement and dialogue.

**Table 5.22: Top three thinking styles and the respective strategising practices - Organisational**

	Qualitative top three Thinking styles – Organisational Group Think		
	1 <sup>st</sup> – Executive	2 <sup>nd</sup> – Conservative	3 <sup>rd</sup> – Liberal
Top three Strategising practices	Discursive 23%	Discursive 30%	Context 33%
	Episodic 23%	Context 30%	Episodic 33%
	Praxis 23%	Praxis 10%	Discursive 17%

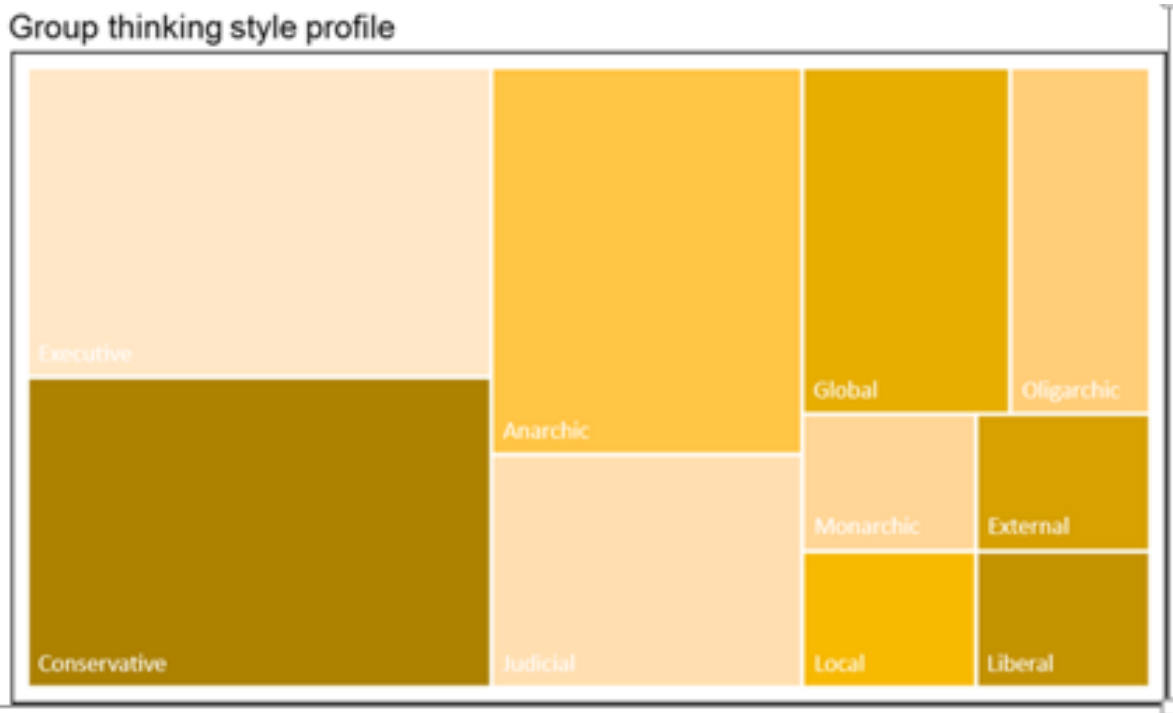
Figure 5.13 shows the Executive thinking styles with all the studies strategising practices listed. The most selected by Executive thinking style being Discursive practices at 23%. Discursive practices could be classified as “selecting practices” following on from Jarzabkowski *et al.*, (2013) classification (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.2.7). Episodic and Praxis, have equal showing, and can possibly be classified as

“analysing practices” using Jarzabkowski *et al.*, (2013) strategising practices situational use. Context, also has the same rating, could be classified as “enumerating practices” (refer Chapter 2, Section 2.2.7).



**Figure 5.13: Qualitative – Executive thinking style and practices (Organisational)**

Another perspective of the data on the Organisational thinking style (where group thinking applies) is present as Figure 5.14. The data are presented as a subset of the profile that will be developed.



**Figure 5.14: Perspective of Top thinking style (Organisational)**

The previous section detailed the top three thinking styles based on the data collected during the qualitative stage. Under each thinking styles, the top three strategising practices were identified. The following section summarises the three situations where Dominant thinking, crisis and organisational thinking into one unified view of the participants at the case organisation.

#### **5.6.2.4 Summary of Dominant, Crisis and Organisational thinking**

A summary of all the previous data is that under each of the three identified situations, the following patterns were noted:

- The dominant situation included 10 out of the 13 TSI subscales;
- the crisis situation had a range of 8 of the 13 TSI subscales; and
- the organisational groupthink had 11 out the 13 TSI subscales.

It is worth noting that the five thinking styles consistently featured under each situation are listed as the executive, the judicial, the local, the liberal, and the conservative thinking styles.

The conservative, anarchic and the executive thinking styles had similar scores when the participants needed to apply 'group thinking' in order to reach a consensus – under an organisational situation. The lowest scores were registered for liberal, external,

local, and monarchic thinking styles during a situation requiring organisational group thinking.

Interestingly, the internal, global and legislative thinking styles scored similar results under normal operations, when the dominant situation was based on past success and historical legacy issues faced by management.

- The highest score for each situation was interesting to note, during a situation requiring 'group thinking' to reach consensus (organisational): conservative, anarchic and executive thinking styles scored the highest. This list confirms Önen's (2015) Type II classification – implying simplicity (refer Chapter 2, Table 2.6).
- During a crisis situation: hierarchical thinking style scored the highest. This in Önen (2015) would be Type I – implying creativity.
- During normal operations: where "this is how we do things" was the regular re-affirmation amongst the participants, the executive thinking style scored the highest. In Önen (2015), this would be Type III – implying a combination of simplicity and creativity.

Table 5.23 is a review of the relationship of the qualitative participants, with their selection of strategising practices. Participants reported back on their changing thinking styles as exemplified by their 'dominant', 'crisis' and the 'group think' at an 'organisational' level.

In Table 5.23, during a crisis, participants thinking had a weak relationship to the strategising practices (0.178). However, while there was a relationship between how participants thought during normal operations 'dominant thinking' and a during a crisis situation (0.362), there was a negative relation during normal operations to using strategising practices (-0.041).

The crisis management situation had the highest correlation with the selection of strategising practices, even though the correlation was weak at 0.178. Furthermore, there was negative correlation between thinking styles when there was a 'crisis' situation and the when group thinking was required during an 'organisational' situation (-0.81).

**Table 5.23: Profile of top management the participants changing situation to strategising practices**

		<b>Strategising practices</b>	<b>Crisis</b>	<b>Dominant</b>	<b>Organisational</b>
<b>Strategising Practices</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.178	-.041	.131
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.330	.824	.475
<b>Crisis</b>	Pearson Correlation	.178	1	.362*	-.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.330		.039	.655
<b>Dominant</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.041	.362*	1	-.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.824	.039		.644
<b>Organisational</b>	Pearson Correlation	.131	-.081	-.083	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.475	.655	.644	
<b>n</b>		32	33	33	33

### 5.6.2.5 Profiles

In the following section, a number of profiles are developed for the top management participants at the case organisation based on the qualitative data collected, namely:

- Profile A – Table 5.24 - raw data from the interview participants
- Profile B – Table 5.25 - top three thinking styles and top three strategising
- Profile C – Table 5.26 - mapping changes in thinking styles based on situations.

#### Profile A

Table 5.24 is the first profile proposed of the participants at the case organisation. While all 33 participants provided valuable feedback to the interview questions, the highlighted yellow were the most frequently quoted in the study, as their input was rich deep data and communicated more clearly than the other participants.

## **Profile B**

Then Table 5.25 is the second perspective of the profile proposed. This implies that the data could be seen from multiple perspectives but using the same data set. This qualitative data is interpreted as follows:

- The case organisation displays mostly Executive thinking style. This thinking style is from the “Form dimension” of TSI. It is followed by Hierarchical thinking style. The case organisation has Global thinking tendencies that are not always aligned to its internally focused top management structures. The participants could be said to be mostly Liberal in thinking styles.

## **Profile C**

The next table, that is Table 5.26, maps the individual top manager’s selection of thinking styles from Dominant thinking, through to Crisis thinking and Organisational group thinking styles. The Hierarchical thinking style and followed by the Executive thinking style had the most activity, the highest frequency of being selected and the most amount changes.

**Table 5.24: Profile A - Top managers' thinking styles and strategising practices (qualitative)**



Respondent	Dominant Thinking Style 1	Thinking Style 2 During Crisis	Organisation Thinking Style	Practices 1	Practices 2	Practices 3	Practices 4	Practices 5	Practices 6	Practices 7
1	Oligarchic	Hierarchical	Conservative	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	Material	0	Praxis
2	Executive	External	Hierarchical	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	Praxis
3	Local	Hierarchical	Internal	Context specific socialisation	0	Episodic	0	0	0	0
4	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	Praxis
5	Conservative	Conservative	Conservative	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Executive	Executive	Executive		Discursive	0	0	0	0	Praxis
7	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal		0	Episodic	0	Material	0	Praxis
8	Liberal	Hierarchical	Anarchic	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Judicial	Judicial	Judicial		Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
10	Executive	Local	Conservative		Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
11	Internal	Local	Executive		Discursive	Episodic	0	0	0	0
12	Executive	Executive	Executive		0	Episodic	Artefacts	Material	0	Praxis
13	Global	Executive	Global		0	0	0	Material	0	0
14	Hierarchical	Conservative	Anarchic		Discursive	Episodic	0	0	0	0
15	Internal	Hierarchical	Executive		0	0	0	Material	0	Praxis
16	Legislative	Hierarchical	Conservative		Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
17	Global	Executive	Judicial		Discursive	Episodic	0	0	0	0
18	Internal	Hierarchical	Executive	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	Legislative	Executive	Executive		0	Episodic	0	0	0	0
20	Executive	Legislative	Anarchic	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	Hierarchical	Executive	Internal		0	0	Artefacts	0	0	Praxis
22	Hierarchical	Executive	Oligarchic	Context specific socialisation	0	Episodic	Artefacts	Material	0	0
23	Judicial	Hierarchical	Local	Context specific socialisation	0	Episodic	0	Material	0	0
24	Global	Hierarchical	Oligarchic	Context specific socialisation	Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
25	Executive	Hierarchical	Internal		Discursive	Episodic	Artefacts	0	0	0
26	Internal	Liberal	Anarchic		0	Episodic	0	0	Organisational norms	0
27	Executive	Executive	Executive		0	0	0	0	0	0
28	Executive	Hierarchical	Global		0	Episodic	Artefacts	0	0	Praxis
29	Legislative	Liberal	Conservative	Context specific socialisation	Discursive	0	Artefacts	0	Organisational norms	0
30	Executive	Hierarchical	Global		0	0	0	Material	0	0
31	Global	Local	Monarchic	Context specific socialisation	Discursive	Episodic	0	0	0	0
32	Executive	Executive	Executive		Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
			63	13	12	13	6	8	2	9

Table 5.25: Profile B – Profile Top 3 thinking styles and top 3 strategising practices

Dimensions	TSI	Dominant thinking style	Top Strategising practice	Crisis -thinking styles	Top Strategising practice	Organisational Thinking style	Top Strategising practice	Overall Scores	Overall Profile	
<b>Function</b>										
	Legislative	3		1		0		4		
	Executive	10	Praxis 21%	9	Episodic 25%	8	Discursive 23%	27	Profile	
	Judicial	2		1		2		5		
<b>Form</b>										
	Monarchic	0		0		1		1		
	Heirarchical	3		11	Context 27%	1		15	Profile	
	Oligarchic	1		0		2		3		
	Anarchic	0		0		4	Praxis 23%	4		
<b>Levels</b>										
	Local	1		3		1		5		
	Global	4	Discursive 38%	0		3		7	Profile	
<b>Scope</b>										
	Internal	4	Episodic 29%	1		3		8	Profile	
	External	0		0		0		0		
<b>Leaning</b>										
	Liberal	3		4	Norms 18%	2		9	Profile	
	Conservative	1		2		5	Episodic 23%	8		

**Table 5.26: Profile C - Top managers' thinking styles and changing situations (interviews)**

TSI >	Liberal	Conservative	External	Monarchic	Hierachica	Legislative	Executive	Internal	Global	Judicial	Anarchic	Oligarchic	Local
Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	1				5						11		
2		2					7						13
3		2			5						11		
4			3						9				
5		2			5						11		
6		2			5	6							
7					5		7	8					
8						6	7				11		
9					5		7					12	
10					5				9			12	
11					5		7	8					
12		2			5								
13	1	2				6							
14					5		7		15				
15				4					15				13
16		2			5			8					
17		2			5							12	
18			3		5		7						
19	1				5			8					13
20	1	2											
21		2					7						
22	1						7						
23	1									10			
24										10			
25							7	8					13
26					5			8		10			
27							7		9				
28						6	7	8					
29					5		7						13
30					5					10	11		
31	1							8	9				
32					5		7						
33						6	7			10			
	8	11	2	1	18	5	17	8	6	6	5	3	5
	8%	12%	2%	1%	19%	5%	18%	8%	6%	6%	5%	3%	5%
<b>KEY</b>													
Dominant style													
Crisis Management													
The Organisation													
Overlapping													

## **5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter started by providing the background to how the data were collected and how the research instruments were used. The demographic information collected was briefly discussed. The sample was described as part of the introduction. Issues of validity and reliability were discussed and proof was provided about the study and the methodology applied, did allow reliable and valid data to be collected. The research questions could be addressed by the statistical analysis in the quantitative section. Furthermore, the data derived from the interviews was discussed in detail linking back to the theme derived from the literature review of both Chapters 2 and Chapter 3.

The next chapter discusses the outcome of the analysis, provides recommendations for the organisation, future research areas, practical implications, and concludes the study.

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## CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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The chapter starts with a short introduction and a brief discussion of the findings of the analysis completed in the previous chapter. Figure 6.1 shows the discussion on the study findings. The research contribution to the body of knowledge is also discussed. Furthermore, recommendations are put forward for future research and for management before the chapter is summarised and the study concluded. Then the three practical implication of the findings that are then explained in detail before the conclusion to the study is presented.



Figure 6.1: The flow of topics for the chapter

*“The best CEOs I know are teachers, and at the core of what they teach is strategy.”*  
(Michael Porter, as quoted by Stewart, 2016:12)

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

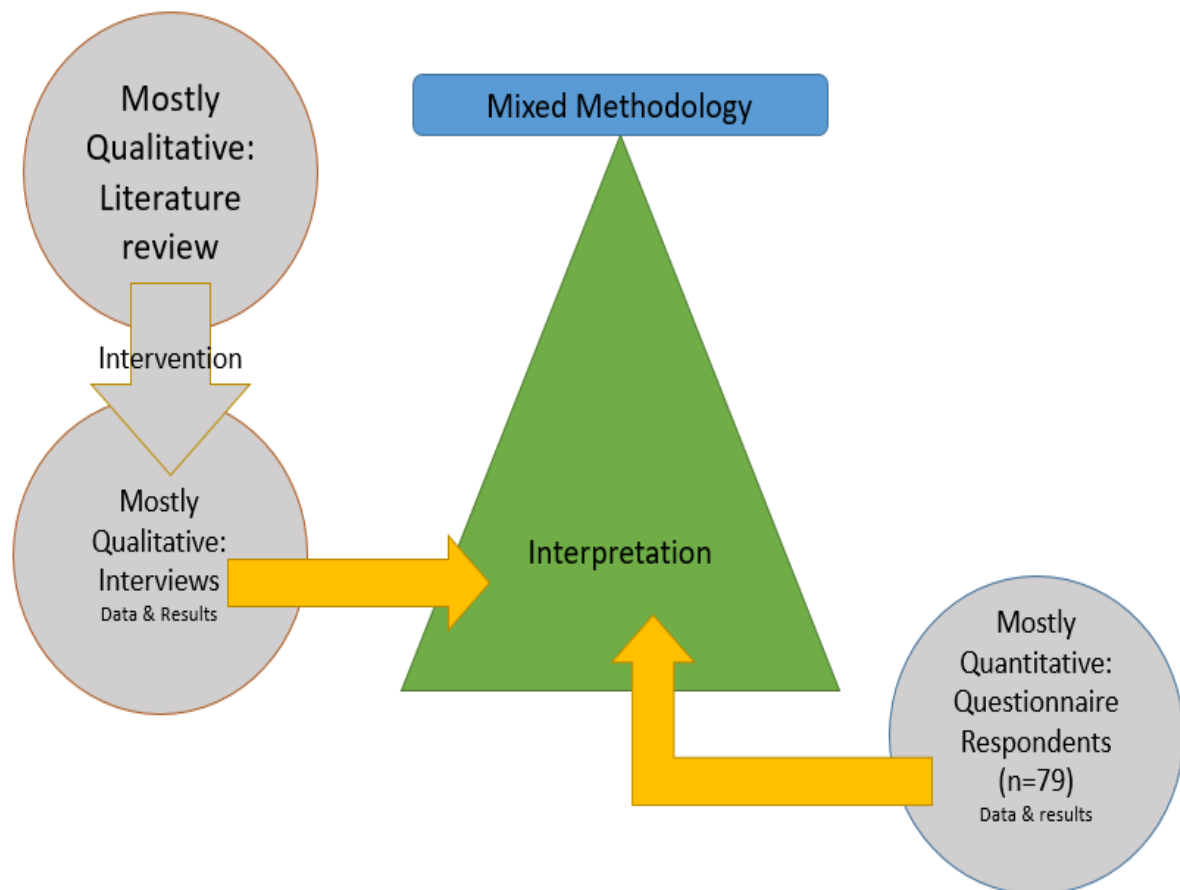
The opening quote implies that the critical role of a CEO as part of top management could be more than formulating strategy – it could also include ‘teaching’ a new perspective on strategising practices to the rest of the top management structures. The purpose of this study was to explore the possible rapport between strategising practices (considered the ‘doing’ of strategy) and the thinking styles of top managers at a South African retailer. A pragmatic philosophy was applied using constructivism in order to enable a deductive approach. A non-experimental research approach was used to examine the mixed data, using mixed methods, while considering environmental realities.

While the previous Chapter 5 focused on presenting the data collected from the survey respondents and the interview participants, this chapter reviews the findings, recommendations contributions and implications of that data.

### **6.1.1 Summary of data collected**

All the data collected showed that the prevalent thinking style, out of the 13 TSI subscales within the case organisation, was the Hierarchical thinking style, followed by the Liberal and Legislative styles. The top three most regularly used strategising practices were material practices, episodic practices and praxis. The following section presents a summary of the data collected from the multiple survey respondents and interview participants into a unifying interpretation in order to answer the research questions.

Figure 6.2 demonstrates the collection point where all the data sources feed into this study in order to be reviewed, triangulated and interpreted.



**Figure 6.2: The data interpretation model**

Table 6.1 shows the presentation of the summary of the respondents thinking styles. The Research Objective 1 is presented to guide the summary. Evidence from the literature review is presented. The quantitative data is summarised and thinking styles correlational relationships are presented. Top management profile, based on the respondents input, is then proposed. The summary of the qualitative data follows before the most commonly used thinking style is revealed.

**Table 6.1: Summary of top management respondents thinking styles**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Research sub-division:</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Summary of the overall thinking style themes</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Research Objective 1:</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">To identify the most common thinking styles of top managers at the case organisation</p>
<p><b>Literature review (qualitative) refer to Chapter 2:</b></p> <p>The expectation was that the hierarchical and legislative thinking styles would dominate the data based on previous studies. It was further expected that global and monarchic would be the least prevalent thinking styles.</p> <p>The results showed that the data behaved in a similar way to previous research, with some limited differences on the subscales. The literature review introduced the theory of Mental Self-Government and Cognitive Thinking Styles on which the original TSI is based on (refer to Chapter 2). Thinking styles were shown as embedded in management's personal identities. Their thinking was shaped by their experiences and the societal dynamics. Thinking styles are a contributing factor to the shaping of strategy and the attainment of organisational competitive advantage.</p> <p>In the literature review, reference was made to the threefold model of intellectual styles, which was adapted and integrated with the TSI (refer to Chapter 2), in order to classify the subscales into the following groupings:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Type I – Hierarchical, Liberal, Legislative, Judicial, and Global</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Type II – Executive, Local, Monarchic, and Conservative</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Type III – External, Anarchic, Oligarchic, and Internal</p> <p>The results showed that the Type I grouping of TSI was dominant, as the top three thinking styles selected were from this group. This implies that top management participants at the retail organisation relied on their 'creativity' in their thinking styles, even though their choice making was ill-structured. This confirms the feedback from the interview participants that the final 'Decision making' ability was a major issue during some of the CEOs' tenures.</p>



The Type II – had ‘simplicity’ as the main characteristic. This type was the least selected group. The group type was made up of the executive, local, monarchic, and the conservative thinking styles.

### **QUANTITATIVE DATA – (Refer To Section 5.3):**

The Hierarchical thinking styles (5.62) had the highest mean, which showed it as the prevalent thinking style in the organisation.

This was closely followed by liberal style (5.44), then the legislative style (5.31), the external (5.28), and lastly, the executive thinking styles (5.08).

The lowest means were for internal (4.76) and conservative (4.27).

### **Correlational relationships**

The liberal thinking style was particularly interesting as it had the highest number of strong correlational relationships with other thinking styles: with external (0.70), with hierarchical (0.718), with legislative (0.713), with judicial (0.755), and with anarchic (0.716).

This implied that top managers with a preference for the Liberal thinking style, likely worked well with other thinking styles that were closely related. The sourcing of the next CEO could be built around finding a manager with a liberal thinking style profile, owing to its stronger relationship with other thinking styles. This was a key finding and top management at the retail organisation could benefit from understanding this dynamic.

There was another important finding which formed part of the recommendations made by the study, which also allowed the creation of a ‘profile’ of the retail organisation’s top management, based on the respondents input:

### **Top Management Respondents Profile**

The original TSI instrument was grouped into five dimensions, made up of Function, Form, Levels, Scope and direction of Lean. These dimensions allow a possible profile of the organisation to be drawn as follows:

- Functions of thinking – the Legislative thinking style was dominant
- Forms of thinking – Hierarchical thinking dominated
- Levels of thinking – Local thinking applied
- Scope of thinking – External thinking was mostly selected

- Direction of lean – the organisation could be said to be Liberal

#### **QUALITATIVE DATA– REFER TO SECTION 5.4:**

It was expected that the participants would provide insight into the dynamics of their thinking styles. What was not expected was that the participants viewed the 13 TSI subscales differently under different circumstances, and that the original 13 subscales would narrow, depending on environmental factors. The hierarchical thinking style was most commonly selected. This has been the prevalent thinking in the retail organisation for the last 15 years.

In each period, bar one year out of 15 years, the hierarchical thinking style underpinned the periods of each new CEO's appointment. The least selected thinking style was the conservative thinking style. While the feedback from the participants implied that the organisation was becoming professional, there was not a view of the organisation becoming more conservative in thinking. Below is the comparison of the definitions of the "most commonly" and "least common" selected thinking styles.

#### **Defining the Hierarchical Thinking Style (most commonly used)**

These top managers prefer a hierarchy of goals and a priority of tasks when there is more than one task to be completed. They are managers who are systematic, well-organised and calculated decision-makers.

#### **Defining the Conservative Thinking Style (least common)**

These top managers adhere to existing rules and procedures in performing their tasks. They minimise change, avoid ambiguity and prefer familiarity.

Table 6.2 shows the presentation of the summary of the top management strategising practices. The Research Objective 2 is presented to guide the summary. Evidence from the literature review is presented. The quantitative data is summarised on strategising practices are presented next. Top management profile is then proposed. Then the summary of the qualitative data follows before the most commonly used strategising practices is revealed.

**Table 6.2: Summary of top management strategising practices**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Research sub-division:</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Summary of the overall strategising practices themes</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Research Objective 2:</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Identify which strategising practices top managers at the case organisation commonly employ</p>
<p><b>Literature review (qualitative) – refer to Chapter 1 and Chapter 2:</b></p> <p>The seven identified strategising practices themes were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• praxis</li> <li>• artefacts</li> <li>• material practices</li> <li>• episodic practices</li> <li>• discursive practices</li> <li>• organisational norms</li> <li>• context-specific socialisation</li> </ul> <p>It was expected that strategising practices would be selected as commonly in use by top management during their daily work. The participants were not requested to rank the list of strategising practices in order of priority, as that would not have answered the research question. However, the participants' frequent use of certain practices was interesting to note and the poor showing of organisational norms as strategising practice was unexpected.</p> <p>The expectation, based on the literature review (refer to Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, Table 2.4) was that top management were preoccupied with formulating strategies that needed to be applied at a deep level within the organisation and developing strategies that are more meaningful to the organisation.</p> <p>It was expected that management spent more of their time engaged in discursive conversation about the direction of the organisation, and that they discussed among themselves the long-term survival strategies, over and above creating shareholder value. Further, it was expected that top management debated the organisational values, the role of ethics in business while delivering on social responsibility issues and the environmental</p>

accountability matters. Top management, therefore, were expected to be invested in discursive practices and context-specific socialisation practices. However, this proved not to be the case.

The findings were that the participants and respondents spent their time following up on the implementation phase of the strategy. This meant that they were more in meetings dealing with operations than the overall strategy. They spent time on routine practices – this goes against “good meeting practices”, (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008:1391)

The results of the data showed that the material practices, episodic practices and artefacts took up more management time. In the definition, these practices were classified as traditional practices, and unlike new practices, they did not enable strategy, they rather, maintained the *status quo*.

### **QUANTITATIVE DATA – REFER TO SECTION 5.3:**

Praxis (21%) and context specific socialisation practices (21%) were the most commonly used strategising practices. Both these practice themes, activities and meaning were compared to each other, using the Atlas.ti analysis tool.

Over 44% of praxis was similar to the context-specific socialisation practices. There was a 35% match of context practices to praxis, when reviewed inversely. All the words that overlap are highlighted below.

- In Atlas.ti, the key words were grouped under each of the identified strategising practices, as per Appendix F.
- The two most commonly selected practices were praxis and context-specific socialisation practices
- A comparison of these two practices showed some key words were the same in their group.
- These words are highlighted below:

#### **Praxis was made up of the following terms:**

Workflow, organogram, structure / meetings, updates, performance reviews / number crunching, budgeting / analysing, reviewing / form filling, systems method and procedures / organisational norms, behaviour, values / jargon, conversations.

#### **Context-specific socialisation practices were made up of the following terms:**

Meetings, **weekly management meetings** / workshops, crisis management / plans, short term goals, targets, tactics / **budgets** (short term, for example, weekly) / **procedures** (for example, day-to-day) / enacted ethics, **practiced values** / frameworks, thematic use of tools / **scripted behaviour**, **accepted norms** / code of conduct, disciplined work, consequences / **language use**, **lingo**, **jargon specific to the organisation** / storytelling, legends, past glories, nostalgia.

#### **QUALITATIVE DATA– REFER TO SECTION 5.4:**

The expectations were that episodic practices would have the most prevalent and most commonly used strategising practices based on the feedback that stated that the retail organisation management is engaged in many meetings, and that some of these meetings were repetitive and time-consuming.

However, the findings were Praxis had an association with the wording the participants used in their feedback during the qualitative process. This confirms Vaara and Whittington's (2012:4) assertion that praxis relies on social practices, meaning that individual top management behaviour is embedded within a web of social practices. Furthermore, the top management were constantly faced with the challenge of aligning their daily activities (micro praxis) to the macro-praxis (overall strategy).

The following section links the Research Objectives in more detail and the above summary into a table with the main findings highlighted.

### 6.1.2 Research objective 1

Table 6.3 is a structured presentation of the Research Objective 1 on the left hand side and the Main findings on the right hand side. The bottom is the discussions presented with evidence and the narrative relevant to addressing the research objectives.

**Table 6.3: Research Objective 1 and findings**

Research objectives	Main Findings
<b>Research Objective 1</b> - To identify the most common thinking styles of top managers at the case organisation	<p><b>The most common thinking style, used by top managers, while strategising is “Hierarchical” thinking style.</b></p> <p>The Hierarchical thinking style had the highest ‘mean’ out of the TSI 13 subscales, (refer to Chapter 5).</p> <p>Top management who preferred to focus their attention across several tasks displayed hierarchical thinking. They preferred to prioritise their tasks. They adapted themselves to the organisation. They allocated resources carefully. They were extremely systematic and organised in their day-to-day management.</p>
<p><b><u>Discussion:</u></b></p> <p>The literature review: covered in detail Sternberg and Wagner’s (1992) TSI (TSI) that was applied to identify the 13 thinking styles of top management at the retail organisation, (refer to Chapter 2, and Table 2.5).</p> <p><b>Quantitative findings - respondents:</b></p> <p>Their high mean scores identified the following top three thinking styles: hierarchical thinking, liberal thinking, and legislative thinking styles (refer to Chapter 5). While the hierarchical and legislative thinking had low standard deviation scores, meaning the results were reliable and consistent, the data on the liberal thinking style were</p>	

unstable and would fluctuate vastly where the study to be repeated and were it to be done under different circumstances.

### **Qualitative findings – :**

Under the dominant situation, the preferred thinking style was the executive thinking style as exemplified by interview participant 27, who identified themselves with executive thinking styles under all three situations and stated:

- *“Look, I work with finance, with risk management and with audit. There are rules and procedures to be followed. If everyone does that job, then there is no reason to change thinking styles or change practices or manage crisis differently. It is the top management role to enforce compliance.”*

In a crisis, the preferred thinking style was hierarchical, as exemplified by interview participant 21 who stated:

- *“Any problem (crisis) can be solved by applying a step by step approach. And allocating experts to deal with their parts of the problem. Let the supply chain expert sort out logistics. Let the buyers sort out the range. Let the store managers handle operations and let executives strategise. Just get the right people in these functions.”*

Under the organisational group thinking, the preferred style of thinking was conservative and executive as confirmed by interview participant 5, who was newly appointed into the organisation and said:

- *“I believe in creating new rules and procedures for my team and division. There are some old ways of operating here that need updating. I know which things to keep and which to toss out.”*

The three situations of a crisis, dominant situation and organisational situation - were considered together, and with the participants' selection of frequency scores added up. Interview participant 4 argued:

- *“There are so many scenarios in retail. This list (TSI) is simply not long enough. Are you sure it's right for retail or even this company?”*

There were eventually only three situations (dominant, crisis, organisational) used in the study and the following was shown about the selection of thinking styles, when all three situations were added together:

- The executive thinking was selected 19 out of 96 times (one participant did not respond for all three situations, and was referred to as the missing value in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).
- The hierarchical thinking style was selected 17 out of 96 times (one participant did not respond for all three situations, and was referred to as the missing value in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).
- These two thinking styles were selected more commonly than the other thinking styles.

### 6.1.3 Research objective 2

Table 6.4 is a structured presentation of the Research Objective 2 on the left hand side and the Main findings on the right hand side. The bottom is the discussions presented with evidence and the narrative relevant to addressing the research objectives.

**Table 6.4: Research Objective 2 and findings**

<b>Research Objective 2</b>	<b>Material practices, Episodic practices and Praxis</b>
Identify which strategising practices top managers at the case organisation commonly employ	<p>The material practices, episodic practices and praxis were the most commonly selected out of the 7 identified themes by Jarzabkowski <i>et al.</i> (2013); Floris (2014) and Garreau <i>et al.</i> (2015) in the literature review on practices (refer to Chapter 2 and Table 2.1).</p> <p>Material practices, as described by Garreau <i>et al.</i> (2015): were included as the use of strategic tools, communication tools, performance reports, office stationery, digital representations and work documents (refer to Chapter 2, and Table 2.1).</p>



	<p>Episodic practices, as described by Floris (2014) were mostly used in management meetings and included reports, quarterly reviews and workshops, monthly standstills, other administrative practices and corporate communication (refer to Chapter 2, and Table 2.1).</p> <p>Praxis, as described by Jarzabkowski <i>et al.</i> (2013) was the workflow, organogram, structure of meetings, which influenced organisational norms and individual behaviour, and affected the organisational values, (refer to Chapter 2, and Table 2.1)</p>
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### **Discussion:**

In the literature review: the seven strategising practices were grouped into broad themes (refer to Appendix F). The top three themes, based on their mean scores were:

- Material practices, episodic practices and praxis (refer to Chapter 5).
- The organisation had the highest mean for material practices (refer to Chapter 5).

### **Quantitative findings –respondents:**

When presented with the online instrument, praxis and context-specific socialisation practices were the most selected strategising practices, meaning that the respondents reflected on their own preference for strategising practices (refer to Chapter 5). However, there was no option to get the respondents to clarify their selection, a point made by Interview participant 31:

*“The problem with an online questionnaire is I can’t debate the point or give supporting evidence in why I would choose option A versus option B or select a number on a scale. No, I am not doing the survey. I don’t have the time. Let’s do the interview and talk.”*

### **Qualitative findings – :**

It was anticipated that praxis would dominate based on the other sources of data. However, the empirical assessment done via the mean calculation, contradicted the input from interview participants: It was found that during the qualitative process, the participants identified praxis and organisational norms as being most common among the five CEOs. However, some interview participants found it difficult to limit the some of the CEO to micro activities of strategising practices, as confirmed by interview participant 9:

*“Does CEO-5 use Decision Trees or does he use Strategic tools? At his level - It is not so much about strategising practices – it is about decision making.”*

- Praxis was the most selected strategising practice during the 15-year period (refer to Chapter 5). Interview participant 30 pointed out:

*“This Praxis, it seems to cover everything that we do as executives. What’s the definition of it? I have an MBA – never heard of it.”*

#### 6.1.4 Research objective 3

Table 6.5 is a structured presentation of the Research Objective 3 on the left hand side and the main findings on the right hand side. The bottom is the discussions presented with evidence and the narrative relevant to addressing the research objectives.

**Table 6.5: Research Objective 3 and findings**

<p><b>Research Objective 3</b> -To explore the possible rapport between the thinking styles and strategising practices used, by top managers, at the case organisation</p>	<p>There was a relationship (however weak), between the narrow subscale selections of TSI and each strategising practice. Correlation should be 0.500 upwards to confirm a strong correlation (refer to Chapter 5).</p> <p>There were three situations identified from the qualitative data collection process that affected the TSI subscales. The respondents gave feedback that their thinking styles changed:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• during normal operations, when “this is how we do things here” was the dominant situation.</li> <li>• during a crisis situation where pressured decision were necessary.</li> <li>• and during times when group thinking was required to reach a consensus, or during “organisational situations”.</li> </ul> <p>There was weak correlation between strategising practices and thinking styles when there was an <b>organisation situation</b> (0.131) that required group thinking, where consensus was required.</p> <p>There was stronger correlation between strategising practices with thinking styles during a <b>crisis situation</b> (0.178). There was an inverse relationship (negative) and a weak correlation between strategising practices and thinking styles during a <b>dominant situation</b> (- 0.041). This implied that the relationship between strategising practices and thinking styles operated in opposite directions to each other.</p>
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### **Discussion:**

The findings revealed a weak associated correlational relationship between the respondent’s strategising practices and their thinking styles. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The difference between 2-tailed analysis and the 1-tailed analysis is to find out whether the analysis tested for impact in one direction (1-tailed) or if testing for the possibility of an effect was in two directions, both positive and negative (2-tailed) (Salkind, 2012:183). The same group tested twice, under different circumstances and at different times, could also give results that are 2-tailed.

The relationship between top management thinking styles and their strategising practices was detailed in the data triangulation in order to create a management profile rather than to prove a correlation (refer to Chapter 5, Section 5.6).

The difficulty of studying if there is a rapport between the units of observation, which were different in nature and from different disciplines of study, was not lost on interview participant 28 who challenged:

- *“You want to see how I think. And then determine how I use practices to achieve strategy? Isn’t one temporal and the other behavioural?”*

Further to the point, Interview participant 26 offered the following opinion:

- *“I don’t think about strategising practices. Or strategic tools. I just use them. I need to know how to use them - yes. They are just enablers. I think about strategy - yes. But I apply trial and tested methods. No need to re-invent the wheel here. There is no time for that in retail.”*

The following section presents a discussion of the findings.

## **6.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The Hierarchical thinking style dominated the findings of the study. The data collected showed that the top three highest mean values, closest to ‘7’ for thinking styles, were registered for Hierarchical (5.62), Liberal (5.44) and Legislative (5.31) out of the 13 thinking styles of the TSI, (refer to Chapter 5, Section 5.6). The study revealed that the Hierarchical thinking style was consistently found within the top three of the most commonly used thinking styles from various sources.

There was a better-associated relationship with the Hierarchical thinking style and strategising practices than with the rest of the TSI subscales. The feedback from the respondents was that the top two strategising practices, out of the seven identified in the literature review (Blasco, 2012; Balogun *et al.* (2013); Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2013); Vesa (2013); Floris (2014) and Garreau *et al.* (2015). These were discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.2, were material practices (37%) and episodic practices (25%). When combined, these two practices made up 62% of the most commonly used practices at the retail organisation.

For the participants, the top three practices were praxis (21%), context (21%) and episodic (18%), adding up to 60% of the top practices (Chapter 5).

Figure 6.3 shows the topics covered in order to answer Research Question 1, drawing on the data collected during the study.



**Figure 6.3: The flow of topics for the discussion of findings on Research question 1**

## **Discussion of finding on RQ1: What thinking styles of top managers at the case organisation are commonly used?**

To answer this research question, the TSI was applied. The TSI showed that out of the 13 possible thinking styles, the Hierarchical, Liberal, and Executive thinking styles were commonly used and had special dynamics, as discussed in detail in the following section.

### **6.2.1 Organisational profile using TSI**

The TSI was an instrument that could be applied to the study in order to answer the research question raised in Chapter 1. The TSI was selected after a consideration of other thinking measurement tools (refer to Chapter 1). Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) TSI instrument was found to be appropriate to use in understanding the retail organisation. The TSI instrument was contextualised within the available research by Sternberg and Grigorenko (1995) and by Sternberg (1997) and was adapted to reflect on the retail organisation in order to identify the top management profile (refer to Chapter 2).

Top management thinking styles, however, were found to have organisation-wide influence and in multiple ways. In building a profile of the organisational thinking styles, a different model to the TSI was applied to build a broader view. In the literature review, reference was made to Önen's (2015) threefold model of intellectual styles (refer to Chapter 2 and Table 2.6). The model is added to the organisational profile. The model showed that the respondents TSI classification could be grouped under three options – creativity, simplicity or a combination of both themes. The findings of the study were that the prevalent thinking styles mostly occurred under the 'creativity option'. Therefore, the 'Type I' thinking styles dominated the organisation.

#### **Interpretation:**

The profile of top management at the organisation could be used to benchmark with other organisations within the retail industry. The benchmark would benefit the management on self-reflection, firstly from how the management is structured in other organisation, secondly to review if there is need to adjust the profile in order to mimic organisations that are more successful. The profile is a "snapshot" of the top management at a point in time. It would be opportune for top management to observe

changes in the profile make up and to understand how that profile has evolved and impacted the strategy.

### **6.2.2 Discussing top management respondents based on TSI**

The influence of thinking styles also impacted on top management as a group, thereby allowing a profile of the respondents to be compiled, using the dimension as espoused in Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) TSI instrument (refer to Chapter 1). The original design of the TSI is made up of five dimensions; namely, the function, form, levels, scope, and the lean dimension (refer to Chapter 1). The emergent pattern that was added to the respondents' profile became evident as the data were analysed (refer to Chapter 5).

Although the Hierarchical thinking styles had the highest mean and it was the most commonly used thinking style, it was the Liberal thinking style that had the highest number of strong relational relationships with other thinking styles, implying a profile of top management could be completed (refer to Chapter 5). Therefore, the top management could be said to be mostly liberal as a group, yet hierarchical as individuals. The findings of the study show that the top management styles of thinking, as based on the TSI, actually change, depending on the circumstances (or environmental realities) in which the top management found themselves.

#### **Interpretation:**

This data could assist the top management allocate resources better amongst themselves to address crisis situations. It could aid top management in looking for complimentary skills sets when promoting new individuals into top management level. Both internal and external candidates could be subjected to several psychometric tests including scenario planning based on the outcome of this study, to check on the candidates' response to changing environments. Top management need to find a balance of how much new thinking they need within their ranks in order to propel the organisation forward and how much "similiar thinking styles" is required to ensure business continuity.

### 6.2.3 Thinking styles changed under three different situations

The qualitative data gathered suggested that the questions were one-dimensional, that the questions were asked with the expectation of getting one definitive answer that was based on a selection of one of the 13 subscales of thinking styles. While it was anticipated that the answers could be ranked, it was not expected that three possible ways to answer the same questions would emerge. This enabled the researcher to categorise the situations (or environmental realities) into three categories: dominant, crisis and organisational. All respondents gave a view on their thinking during each situation. Supported by the data gathered from all 32 participants (one missing value), confirming the research by Zadeh and Angazi (2016), it became clear that the respondents thinking styles differed under various situations (refer to Chapter 2).

Spiller (2012) and Nuntamanop *et al.* (2013) echo that the environment informed this or the situation in which they found themselves (refer to Chapter 2). This was neither covered in detail in the theory, nor was it evident in the literature review or in the past research as discussed in Chapter 1. There was reference to the fact that the environment does influence the internal mechanics of an organisation, for example, Vaara and Whittington (2012) pointed out that the SWOT analysis, as a strategic tool, implies there are environmental factors to be considered (refer to Chapter 2). However, the impact of the environment on top management thinking styles neither was defined in as much detail, nor was it measured in an empirical study.

The three situations (or environmental realities) are referenced in Chapter 5 as the following:

- The dominant situation (when normal operations took place). This situation was based on the founder's legacy. It was reported as "this is how we do things here" as the common phrase used by the participants;
- A crisis situation (when pressured decision making was required); and
- An organisational situation (when group thinking was required to reach consensus).

The study anticipated that there would be a relationship between the top management thinking styles and their choice of strategising practices. What was not anticipated was how the level of correlation would be moderated, depending on the environmental situation in which these top managers found themselves. The three scenarios, or



situations, were identified under which the strength of the selected thinking style changed and showed how the TSI range was impacted, by either expanding or contracting from the original 13 subscales. Under duress, top management participants changed away from their normal 'dominant' thinking styles (refer to Chapter 5).

The analysis showed that the behaviour of the data changed during a crisis management issue, and this was drastic enough to warrant a secondary top management profile. The participants who communicated confirmed this that their preferred thinking style did not remain the same from situation to situation. They also reported that their thinking styles differed depending on the severity of the crisis situation they were faced with at that time. Furthermore, they reported that their preferred thinking style changed when they were working within in a group situation where 'group thinking' took over (refer to Chapter 5). The participants had reflected on the list of thinking styles provided for them to review, and confirmed that the list was not always a full reflection of what was happening to their thinking under each situation.

### **Interpretation**

There is an opportunity for the organisation top management population to engage more in discursive practices, to complete deep post-mortems and lessons learnt analysis. There are too many events taking place within the organisation having a fundamental impact on how top management respond, without there being a deep reflection on top management response after the event has past. While policies are adjusted and rules re-enforced, there is no deep conversation nor preventative leadership discussion. The thinking styles are about restoring the status quo. Top management practically use planning for the future, mostly to secure budgets and ensure special projects on track. However, they do not use foresight to anticipate how their own thinking styles will be impacted. They do not forecast what strategising practices would be required in order to realise their future strategies.

### **Dominant thinking during normal operations**

Part of the influence on the organisation was based on the dominant thinking pervading the retail organisation. There are variations in the dominant thinking style of the organisation, depending on the situation and the work being done. This implied that the organisation, through having had the founder's values imbued into the management ethos, and having had the legacy passed on from one generation to the next, had developed a specific profile or corporate identity (refer to Chapter 5).

This is at times, referred to as the culture of the organisation, requiring certain compliance in thinking styles that are aligned to "how things are done" at the organisation.

### **Crisis thinking**

The hierarchical thinking style, used during a crisis, had the largest change among the TSI subscales, moving from 15% to 35% (refer to Chapter 2, and Table 2.2 and to Chapter 5). Interestingly, the hierarchical thinking style was not selected during an 'organisational' situation where group thinking was required.

There was lasting impact implied from CEO-2, who as chief executive, was described as not having the skills to prioritise work. There were several large-scale projects that the organisation faced under his tenure (refer to Chapter 5). These projects ended up not being coordinated and sequenced properly and the top management blamed the CEO for not having the strength to intervene and direct them.

The influence of thinking styles on the organisation became pronounced during a crisis situation. The participants indicated that their normal thinking styles changed under stressful moments (during a 'crisis'). During the 15-year period under review, the retail organisation has had to deal with the following crises:

- falling share price due to low performance;
- loss of market share to increased competition;
- failed attempts at starting overseas operations;
- failed attempts to go into the greater African market;
- internally weak supply chain systems;
- failing information technology systems;
- poor relationships with suppliers;

- undesirable leadership styles within the executive teams;
- five drastic changes in CEO in 15 years;
- violent union strikes, the food-poisoning scandal; and
- large-scale employee voluntary severance packages.

Each one of these intense environmental situations required a different set of thinking styles to survive the specific crises. Top management respondents applied a narrow range of the TSI during a crisis.

### **Organisational identity (Group think)**

The participants were clear that top management, as a collective, thought differently than when they dealt with challenges as individuals. There was a specific influence of compliance in the organisation when the top management acted as a collective. Their individual thinking styles were changed and challenged when they worked in a group with their peers, especially where consensus was required for a decision to be made. The participants referred to peer pressure being implied or that being a team player was required. While top management had basic values connecting them to each other, it was their varied skills, different experiences, decentralised departments, and individualism that meant that their thinking would need to be tempered in order to fit in with the rest of the executive top management team (refer to Chapter 5).

In summary, top management thinking styles at the focal organisation were not as static as originally anticipated at the beginning of the study, the research showed dynamic changes

Table 6.6 shows the three situations or environmental factors that are events that require thinking to change with these scenarios. It implies that the effect results in a moderation of normal thinking styles, for example: a) dominant thinking styles, b) thinking styles under stress or crisis, and c) organisational groupthink.

**Table 6.6: Changing thinking styles based on three situations**

<p><b>Dominant situation</b></p> <p>Under normal conditions, “how things are done” the dominant situation in the organisation, the relationship between the study units of observation had a negative correlation. The dominant situation was influenced by the strength of each of the CEO’s personality, their will power, their strong ideas and their character as they imposed these on the rest of the top management team.</p> <p>The TSI range was 11 subscales out of the original 13. (refer to Chapter 5)</p>
<p><b>Crisis situation</b></p> <p>Under the condition of high stress levels, the relationship between the top management thinking styles and their strategising practices became more evident, better aligned, there was improved correlation, more focus and fewer options were applied as solutions. The TSI range narrowed down from 13 subscales to either subscales (refer to Chapter 5)</p>
<p><b>Organisational situation (group think)</b></p> <p>Under the condition of peer work teams, where groupthink was required, the correlational relationship between strategising practices and thinking styles was weaker. When the organisation thought as a collective, the participants communicated that their thinking changed – ‘group thinking’ took over and they adopted similar styles of collective thinking. The TSI range was reduced to 10 subscales out of the original 13 (refer to Chapter 5).</p>

Under normal daily operations, the dominant style that the participants used was reported as the Executive thinking style (24%) that showed these managers were concerned with the implementation of practices with set guidelines (refer to Chapter 5). It was followed by the Hierarchical thinking style (18%) where these managers showed a preference for distributing their attention across several practices that were being prioritised. The practices within the ‘organisational norms’ theme featured the lowest (6%) with most of the participants. This indicated a frequency of possible low use and a weaker correlational relationship.

To summarise the discussion on how top management thinking styles influenced the organisation, the hierarchical thinking style, according to the respondents, was most commonly used. The respondents communicated that their level of thinking styles differed depending on the situation they were facing and they could not be limited to a single classification. Previous research, however, did not adequately measure the environmental impact on the TSI. The circumstances affecting the dominant thinking and changes in thinking styles, based on a crisis or requirements of group consensus, all influencing an organisation, are new detailed and measured information. The following section discusses Research Question 2. Figure 6.4 below shows the topics covered in order to answer Research Question 2, drawing on the data collected during the study.



**Figure 6.4: The flow of topics on findings on Research Question 2**

## **Discussion of findings on RQ2: What strategising practices of top managers at the case organisation are commonly used?**

To answer the question, the study differentiated between “commonly used” practices and “high mean practices”, which showed the importance of the practices that took up more time. Therefore, based on the mean, the strategising practices of respondents are episodic practices and material practices. However, the most commonly selected was praxis. The practices that took up more of respondents’ time were context-specific socialisation practices and episodic practices.

To explain this further, the following section applies.

### **6.2.4 Findings on strategising practices used by top management**

In order to discuss how the organisation’s choice of strategising practices related to the thinking styles, it was found in the research by Gomez and Bouty (2011) that strategising practices could be grouped into specific function-based themes (refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.2). A few practices overlapped across the seven themes. The overlaps were not a problem, according to Gomez and Bouty (2011) as they defined each strategising practice by looking at all the daily activities in which top management are engaged (refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.2). The respondents’ understanding of what makes up strategising practices differed from the definitions proposed by Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2013) found in the literature review (refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.2). For example, some of the respondents at the retail organisation did not see material practices, praxis and artefacts in the light of strategising practices.

#### **Qualitative data Findings– strategising practice**

After analysing the qualitative data, it was found that the top three dominant practices accounted for 68% of the participant’s time at the retail organisation. The practices are influenced by the participant’s Hierarchical thinking styles. The three most dominant practices were a) the material practices, b) the episodic practices and c) the praxis - as practiced by the participants (refer to Chapter 5).

However, the participants selected the context-specific socialisation practices (21%) and the episodic practices ahead of all other strategising practices (refer to Chapter 5).

The selection showed that the participants spent most of their time engaged in meetings, crisis management, planning short-term goals, and enforcing procedures. The practices included scripted behaviour and accepted norms that relied on the language used when storytelling practices were used.

Some participants reported that the organisation had now become conservative (18%), profiling the thinking style development (refer to Chapter 5) and the organisation was reported to be professional (refer to Chapter 5).

The participants reported that the retail organisation was becoming Executive in its thinking style. It was further evidenced that certain strategising practices were influenced by specific top management's thinking styles.

### **Quantitative Findings – strategising practices**

The analysis of the quantitative data indicated that the bulk of management's time was taken up by episodic practices, made up mostly of meetings as described by Floris (2014), Balogun *et al.* (2013) and Blasco (2012) in Chapter 2 and in Table 2.1 and Figure 2.4. The feedback confirmed a higher level of strategy implementation. As reported by 57% of the respondents (45 out of 79 cases), they mostly implemented strategy (refer to Chapter 5). This confirmed the outcome of the participants' feedback and the respondents trended in the same direction, and this was consistent feedback, which was also new information.

### **Findings on participant's 'implementing' strategy**

Vaara and Whittington (2012) assert that top management were expected to be aligned to practise theory while Gomez and Bouty (2011) suggest that top management are solely responsible for the 'formulation' of strategy (refer to Chapter 2 and Chapter 3).

It was found that 25% of the top managers who participated in the interviews feedback, actually still reported to be 'implementing' strategy (refer to Chapter 5). On further interrogation, the issues were threefold:

- Some participants reported a lack of skilled staff within their middle management structures that were unable to ensure good execution and sound implementation of the strategy. Research by Vaara and Whittington (2012) suggests that top management would step in (refer to Chapter 2) and this is confirmed in Chapter 5.

- Lack of trust that their teams understood the strategy and would therefore execute the enabling practices accordingly (refer to Chapter 5).
- There was a lack of a clear communication strategy and or poor discursive practices to either use them as tools (refer to Chapter 1) or to use them as leverage (refer to Chapter 5) or to use them as solution to fix the organisational problems (refer to Chapter 5).

### **Findings on situational use of practices**

Thinking styles have been discussed (refer to Section 6.2.1) and strategising practices have been considered. According to Whittington (2004), Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2007), Vesa (2013) and Löwstedt, (2015), top management then needed to make their choice and the literature review suggests that there was a specific process that needed to be followed (refer to Chapter 2 and Figure 2.6).

In order for top management to make their choice, the seven strategising practices can be further classified by their application in any given situation. Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2013) posit that these are: selecting practices, locating practices, analysing practices, enumerating practices or physicalising practices (refer to Chapter 2)

It was evident that the Hierarchical thinking style related to the situational use of 'selecting' practices. This was exemplified by the application of episodic practices. There were elements of physicalising when the material practices were included in the same classification.

### **Interpretation:**

There are no right or wrong strategising practices. Most of the activities listed in this study are given meaning only when top management imbue importance in that particular activity. What was evident in the study was that when the CEO showed a particular interest in a certain practice, top management aligned their focus on the same practice, some reluctantly. What was more evident, is that the reasons why some practices were adopted was not always clear. It was possible that practices were no longer significant but were being practiced for the sake of routine.

The following section addresses Research Question 3.



### 6.2.5 Rapport between the units of observation

Figure 6.5 below illustrates the flow to answer Research Question 3, drawing on the data collected during the study.



**Figure 6.5: Findings on Research Question 3**

Data analysis shows that Research Question 3: "Is there a rapport between the thinking styles and the strategising practices, as used by top managers at the case organisation" - can be answered successfully and positively. The data collected from multiple sources have confirmed this and data analysis has backed up these findings. Triangulation of the various sources has also confirmed the positive response: Yes, there is a rapport between strategising practices and thinking styles, as evident in the following section.

#### **Findings on the relationships**

There was a relational relationship between top management strategising practices and their thinking styles, enough to formulate a profile of the participants and respondents but not enough to prove a strong correlation (refer to Chapter 5).

When the thinking styles were expanded further on to reflect the different environmental situations, the following relationships were found:

- Dominant thinking and strategising practices - inverse relationship
- Crisis thinking and strategising practices - positive relationship
- Organisational and strategising practices - positive relationship

This implied that the dominant thinking prevalent within the retail organisation, based on its history, long-term top management tenure and past success worked against strategising practices. It implies it would be difficult to introduce new strategising practices in this organisation without exceptional change management principles being applied by force. This is consistent with the feedback from the participants (refer to Chapter 5).

Previous studies had not shown these changes to Sternberg and Wagner's (1992) TSI instrument. The impacts on the TSI subscales are not recorded anywhere in the literature review. This proved to be a pivotal point of the study and it provided new information, which is covered in detail in the contributions and recommendations section, as part of this study's contribution to the body of knowledge on practices and thinking styles.

The Liberal thinking style had the highest number of correlations with External thinking, Hierarchical, Legislative, Judicial and with Anarchic thinking styles. This meant that top managers who identified as liberal thinkers, also closely associated themselves with these thinking styles and had the strongest similarity (highest mean scores) with the application of the episodic and material practices as the key strategising practices that they used, indicating the strongest relational relationship (refer to Chapter 5).

When the lowest mean scores were examined for the conservative and Internal thinking style, it was noted that the conservative thinking style relationship with strategising practices was still better with episodic practices and material practices than with the remainder of the strategising practices (refer to Chapter 5).

For the Internal thinking style, there was a better relationship with discursive practices than most, implying that the retail organisation was not only internally focused; it was looking for answers by holding internal discussions. Goldman *et al.* (2015) hold the same view that internal self-examination is a prerequisite to solve organisational problems (refer to Chapter 2). This is if this self-examination serves as a short process of the assessment of the internal resources and capabilities (refer to Chapter 3) to be compared to the industry standards (Corradi *et al.* (2010); Bromiley & Rau 2014). This should also not be a long process of procrastination, as the interview participants implied it was in the retail organisation.

The retail organisation was in danger of being hindered by its tendency to be internally focused, as indicated by their use of the “Internal thinking style”. The internal style has the lowest correlational relationships with the other thinking styles (refer to Chapter 5). This is confirmed by the participants’ feedback (refer to Chapter 5).

The Hierarchical thinking style had the most notable relationship (highest mean) with all the strategising practices registering well over the mid-point for each of the seven practices. This is closely followed by the Liberal thinking style only registering organisational norms below 5. This implies that participants and respondents with the Hierarchical and Liberal thinking styles thrive at applying various strategising practices, and this profile is the most prevalent in the retail organisation (refer to Chapter 5).

The following section presents the research contribution.

### **6.3 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION**

There are unique contributions that the study proposes. The study was set within practice theory. The study could contribute to the S-as-P perspective, as it used a unique top management’s viewpoint in the application of strategising practices. The study was a multi-disciplinary research (a mix of business sciences and human sciences) based on top management’s strategising practices (a business management variable) and top management thinking styles (a variable belonging to Psychology).

### **6.3.1 Five contributions made by the study**

Below is a discussion of the five contributions to the body of knowledge that are proposed in the study.

- Firstly, there is a contribution that relates to uncovering how thinking styles ‘change’ under different circumstances within the context of the environmental factors impacting on management (refer to Chapter 5, Section 5.4). The impact of these environment factors are also referenced in studies by Liebl and Schwarz (2010) and Fortunato and Furey (2012) (refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.4, and in Chapter 3, Section 3.2 and Figure 3.3). Environmental factors were not measured in absolute detail in these previous studies. Moreover, other studies also did not review the environmental factors using a specific group viewpoint, in this case top management. This top management viewpoint was taken in order to add a new dimension to existing theory. The study provides a new perspective on top management strategising practices and their thinking styles. The study could have been extended to uncover how thinking styles ‘change’ under different circumstances within the context of the environment in which the organisation operates.
- Secondly, the behaviour of the data was unexpected. How the TSI scale of 13 subscales (refer to Chapter 1) narrowed down from 13 subscales to 10 for the ‘dominant’ thinking style, narrowed to an 8 subscale during a ‘crisis’ situation, and expanded to 11 subscales for the ‘organisational’ thinking style (refer to Chapter 5, Section 5.4). The behaviour of the data was unexpected and not previously discussed in detail in other research. The contraction and expansion of the TSI subscales was not anticipated. This could imply that the instrument was not sufficient on its own and that, in the future, more than one psychometric test would be required to classify thinking styles of top management.
- Thirdly, the application of the TSI measurement instrument on a population of top management provided a new perspective. The population is rarely researched, as most studies have focused on individuals or positions that make up top management. Previous studies by Goldman (2012) rarely profiled top management as a generic group (refer to Chapter 1). The literature reviewed showed that past research by Cilliers and Sternberg (2001) and by Murphy (2006) and on the TSI

focused on students at universities, or at middle management level (Grigorenko & Sternberg, 1998; Zhang, 2005b; Balkis & Isiker, 2005; Fjell & Walhovd, 2004), or focused on consultants and / or strategists (refer to Chapter 1 and Chapter 4). The study focuses specifically on top management and uncovers partially new information on how the participants and respondents “think” and how they apply strategising practices.

- Fourthly, the implication is that the participants and respondents were more involved with the implementation of the strategy stage than would have been expected. The literature reviewed on Bromiley and Rau (2014) shows that the classic roles of the management function are: “the planning, the organising, the controlling, the leading and the staffing” of organisations (refer to Chapter 3). Participants interviewed in this study, spent less time on these other top management functions because of the implementation phase taking up their time. While the time allocation is highly subjective, and it is not necessarily a reflection of the top management being less strategic, it does re-inforce the participants views that within top management there was still a core group that actually strategised. It was new information that the amount of time spent on strategy implementation was far more than was expected for most of the participants. The participants and respondents at the retail organisation do not spend most of their time conceptualising and formulating the overall strategy. They spend more of their time in the implementation of strategy than normally expected. Of course, the implementation phase is more time-consuming than planning, more so due to the nature of the retail industry. However, what came across in the study was that top management were preoccupied with micro-managing middle management and divisional projects.
- Fifthly, the combination of multiple theories of mental self-government, cognitive continuum theory and the application of thinking styles under one umbrella as in the study. This was done in order to arrive at new perspective, new information and to contribute to the body of knowledge. The TSI instrument (Allinson & Hayes 2012) which is based on CSI was used, while referencing the theories of CCT and MSG, all in one study. The alignment of the TSI (Sternberg & Wagner, 1992) to the Cognitive Continuum Theory (Hammond et al., 1987:753) and mental self-

government (Sternberg (1997) offered a new prism from which to research the data (refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.4 and Figure 2.6).

Previous research by Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2012) and by Burke and Wolf (2017) has touched on strategising practices and strategy formulation. In the study, further steps were taken to group daily activities (praxis) into thematic views in order to develop a grouping of strategising practices (refer to Chapter 1).

There were some expected overlaps between some practices. The grouping of certain practices gave importance to the thematic classifications applied in the study. If one or two practices overlapped, it did not change the group. However, if three or more practices overlapped, then the grouping changed. The study may extend the practice perspective put forward by Balogun *et al.* (2013) to promote critical analysis of the taken-for-granted strategising practices (refer to Chapter 1). The contributions of the study facilitate a greater awareness that the strategy practitioner's perception of the choice of strategising practices as influenced by their thinking styles still needs further study.

## **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are recommendations for future research on strategising practices and top management.

### **6.4.1 Recommendations for future research**

The recommendations for future research includes that the research population be expanded to include the whole top management population (133) in order to obtain a broader sample. It would also be beneficial to conduct research that has longitudinal data and observation opportunities for cross-case analysis with other organisations within the same retail industry, on the same units of observation as the current study. The study was limited to a generic term of 'top management'. Future research could possibly include a gender bias in the review of the data and the data analysis. Moreover, the role of women in all organisations' top management structures, is an important agenda and should be championed by research. This may indicate the positives of having a diverse and fully representative executive structure.

Future research could propose a conceptual framework to capture the environment that influences management thinking styles. Other research could examine which practices are eventually stopped by a 'disruptor' to the system, as personified by a top manager who also acts as a 'change agent', and how that changes, the organisational culture and how it impacts on the organisational values (refer to Chapter 5). Within that study, a sub-research question could be to examine the role of unions in either hindering or actually propagating certain strategising practices (refer to Chapter 5).

Other recommendations are aimed at understanding how top management spend their time. The merging function of strategy 'formulation' and 'strategy implementation', whether owing to a lack of skills or low trust as seen in the study, is a concern (refer to Chapter 2). The skills gap was referenced by most participants; therefore, it is a real issue (refer to Chapter 5). The top management's involvement with the strategy process could have been better explored as some senior managers still reported that 'implementation of strategy' was taking up most of their time. More research is required on how top management allocated their time across the management functions.

The study's findings showed that there were opportunities for the application of discursive practices, as well as context specific socialisation practices, as a way of holding strategic conversations within the organisation (refer to Chapter 5). Communication needs to take place across the top management population (133) to create deeper meaning; better understanding and buy-in for the attainment of the overall strategy (refer to Chapter 5). The recommendations include using these discursive practices to enable strategy and the development of an effective communication strategy.

During the study, it was evident that only a few of the top managers identified themselves as 'strategists' or 'strategy practitioners', while others avoided the term completely (refer to Chapter 5.). This could possibly be because being a 'strategist' at the retail organisation had a poor reputation following the difficult 'centralisation' process. Strategists applied a temporary mind-set to long-term problems, which was contradiction (refer to work by Vaara and Durand (2012) in Chapter 1). Therefore, strategists were misunderstood as applying short-term business tactics. It was noted that most top managers identified the role of strategist as what 'consultants' do, or what consultants brought in from outside 'on contractual basis', in order to guide the

organisation's present thinking (refer to Chapter 5). Future research could examine when top management apply their strategist abilities, without consultants guiding the process.

It was found that during the qualitative data collection process, the participants confused strategic tools with strategising practices. This raised the question of how practices and tools were being viewed, how they were being applied and how both theories were being understood and practically used in day-to-day praxis, an example as stated by Balogun *et al.* (2013) and Blasco (2012).

There is merit to focus on, not only the findings from the analysis of the data, but also on the findings from the research instruments, in order to investigate 'how' these very same instruments are actually and practically applied in a given study. This implies that the research instrument themselves become worth a review for their relevance and for how they affect the data they are meant to analyse, (refer to Chapter 1).

Future research could look at what strategising practices are being applied by large organisations in their selection of community-based projects, especially where the organisation could not derive profit, where their investment is based on purely altruistic intentions. As part of the social responsibility drive, the current retailers' mind-set in South Africa is emphasising community service where their organisations are based and where they operate. This would allow an examination of strategising practices being used without a profit motive. A sub-focus of that study could examine how strategising practices could be used to improve the organisations' environmental impact.

Lastly, one of the major problems facing South African organisations is the deep corruption endemic both in the corporate world and in State enterprises that stifles economic growth (refer to Chapter 3). Corruption affects politics, organisations, academic institutions, and various communities, over and above its impact on the country's economy. Future research could look at what the role of strategising practices are, in fighting corruption, and challenge Asungu's (2013:54) view that strategic practices cannot be used to fight corruption.

The following are recommendations for the focal organisation's top management.



### 6.4.2 Recommendations for the focal organisation

When asked to review what the prevalent thinking style at the organisation was, over 25% of the respondents reported that the organisation did not have collaborative systems in place. More than 12% of the respondents reported that there was no cross-functional cohesiveness. The findings were that top management could better apply resource-based view (RBV) strategies with cohesion among the internal structures and across all departments, based on the natural inclination to have 'shared services' to avoid duplication. They could have used top management better to realise the outcome. Therefore, a better approach to obtain buy-in from top management could have been to develop a resource-based approach. Research by Corradi, *et al.* (2010), Bromiley and Rau (2014) suggests that internal top management could better apply RBV without taking over the direct running of projects. In the study, it would have required the same top management at the retail organisation to think their way through various projects and apply specific strategising practices appropriate to the project (refer to Chapter 3 and Figure 3.3).

The participants were asked how they 'used' the strategising practices. The answers confirmed that 'newness' of strategising practices was limited (Chapter 5). A new recruit's approach could have required that top management would have to start to think creatively and resourcefully about their organogram and their structures, possibly creating:

- new strategising practices;
- stopping old practices;
- updating and changing some strategising practices; and
- maintaining some crucial practices.

Included with those participants who 'applied some old practices and some new' – it could be said that over 56% of the participants at the case organisation commonly used old practices, possibly resisting change. The participants scored highest (31%) for 'updating and changing practices' (refer to Chapter 5).

The following section looks at the theoretical implications of the study and the findings related to the data interpretation.

### **6.4.3 Recommendations for top management**

There was substantial evidence that the practice of promoting top managers from within the focal organisational ranks and file was a reinforcement of the same thinking, same values, same practices, and same way of doing strategy. While rewarding trust, loyalty and longevity was commendable, the retail organisation needed to reconsider an application of recruiting 28% of top management from outside the organisation (refer to Chapter 5, and Figure 5.7 that showed that generating new practices was at 28%). By implication, it could signify that new practices take hold closer to this threshold. Therefore, it is recommended that at around 28%, new practices start having organisational wide impact. This is a high number, considering that currently the case organisation prefers to promote into top management, with a recent exception of the new CEO, via internal recruiting and upskilling. The 28% may possibly represent the critical mass required for internal 'change' and could be verified by research. It was not enough to appoint non-executive directors from outside, as they lacked the operational insight required to change the organisation. In order to move the culture on, top management needed to start integrating alternative thinking, especially in the recruitment of outsiders into the top 133 management positions (refer to Chapter 5, and Figure 5.7 that showed that generating new practices was at 28%).

During the interviews process, top management were asked to describe what prevented them from fully utilising their choice of strategising practices. They pointed out that their own thinking styles were in direct conflict with the main organisational thinking. This implied that a transformational process is required to professionalise management practices and to break away from the legendary past success. The continuous 'past thinking' referred to by Fortunato and Furey (2012) was holding the top management back (refer to Chapter 2 and Table 2.7). Top management could consider shifting their focus to incorporate 'future thinking'.

The study found that the context-specific socialisation practices were being inadequately applied. The application would have been better applied in meetings. Meetings were being used to communicate management decisions and were not being used to create deeper meaning or understanding of the strategy. Good meeting practices, as espoused by Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008:1391), were not being

applied. Top management tended to have a set agenda and follow-up items were relegated to a sub-committee away from the main meetings.

The number of times in a year that the overall strategy is reviewed was highlighted in the study. Top management's involvement with strategising at the case organisation seemed unconventional and erratic. Participants referred to reviewing the strategy and strategising practices only once a year while others reviewed it once a month. It is possible that some operational performance reviews were mistaken as a review of the overall strategy. The retail organisation could align two major yearly reviews and hold well communicated strategy sessions to reflect on the strategy failings and plans with the top 133 managers, who in turn should hold large-scale reviews with their own teams. The organisation could use these research findings to improve the organisational application of strategising practices. They could raise awareness of what 'strategic work' is, and then clearly communicate the immediate goals of the strategy, and how these can be broken down into the practical daily practices that Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2007) and Vaara (2010) consistently refer to in their research (refer to, Chapter 1 and Table 1.1).

Furthermore, discursive practices, as one of the seven strategising practices identified in the research, are employed by strategists, and should therefore be better employed by top management. A concerted effort is required to achieve the aspirations of the retail organisation by actively enacting discursive practices (refer to Chapter 5).

## **6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter is concluded with both the data derived from a theoretical review of the existing literature and the empirical study conducted at the retail organisation. The chapter summary concludes that material practices and episodic practices, along with top management's Hierarchical thinking styles, were related enough to develop a top management profile on thinking styles. The empirical study included a relational analysis between measures of the seven strategising practices and the thirteen thinking styles subscales. The relationship was found to be associated, though not enough to prove correlation, it was adequate to create a 'profile of the top management' and a 'profile of the retail organisation'. The study examined how top

management thinking styles related to the organisation's choice of strategising practices. Previously, very little research work had been conducted on strategising practices and thinking styles within the retail industry.

The practice theory was the basis that was applied in the study, using the S-as-P perspective, to review top management strategising practices. The research findings confirmed what was reported in the literature review regarding data trending in the same direction. However, this was only enough to allow a 'profile of the top management' to be developed and did not prove strong correlation between the research units of observation.

There were limitations to the study and there were plausible ways to address them. Research gaps were identified, and areas for further research were tabled. The study was conducted in a number of categories and areas related to the research question and research objective, with each section having a data collection instrument to group the respondents and participants, and the application of the analysis tools. The issues of the quantitative instrument's reliability and validity were addressed. Issues of the interview's authenticity and trustworthiness were dealt with in detail. The population and the demographic information of the sample were briefly described. The methodology chapter was concluded with a review of the ethical considerations, in addition to issues of related to confidentiality and obtaining the required consent to conduct the study.

Figure 6.6 summarises the main theories and flow that guided the study on the left, with the main data sources shown in circles, and the top three outcomes of TSI and top three strategising practices captured below the triangle.

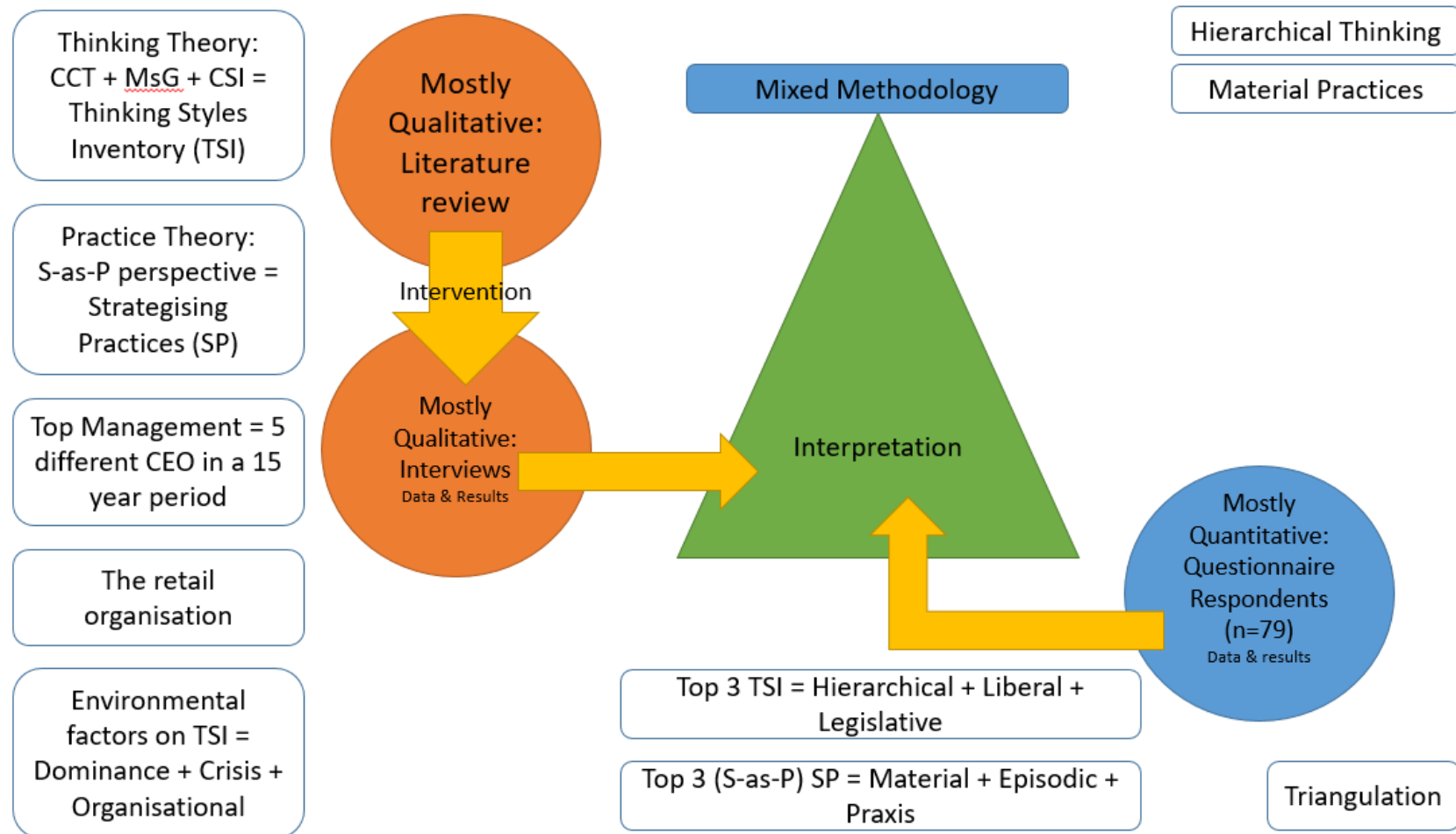


Figure 6.6: Profile of the retail organisation - strategising practices and thinking styles

The research on which the dissertation was based aimed at determining what the actual top management strategising practices and their thinking styles were at the retail organisation, and how the choice of strategising practices were related to the thinking styles. The outcome was that the tenuous relationship between the study units of observation provides a 'profile of the top management' and a 'profile of the retail organisation'.

## **6.6 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The retail organisation was selected for this study based on its position within the South African retail market as a large influential organisation. Any substantial improvements in its top management strategising practices could positively impact the performance of the organisation. There were four direct implications for the outcome of the data analysis:

- Organisational implications;
- New recruits into top management;
- Centralisation; and
- Theoretical implications.

Each of these direct and practical implications from the study are briefly discussed in the next section.

### **6.6.1 Organisational implications**

There were differences observed by region, where material practices were scored ahead of episodic practices in the different locations. The other feedback on strategising practices proved to be isolated to certain regions or some departments. These could neither be deemed common practices throughout the organisation, nor could they be generalised to the broader retail industry. The organisational implication suggested that the findings on top management strategising practices and thinking styles could be applied across top management population (133) only. Research by Balogun *et al.* (2013) and Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2012) implies there are opportunities to improve management's ability to strategise. The study makes the link between top management's strategising practices and their thinking styles that could be used to enhance further top management's ability to strategise and improve their ability to

maximise the theoretical application of practices (refer to Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 5). The strategy-as-practice perspective research agenda seeks to narrow the gap between theory and how it is practically applied in the working environment, mostly to show relevance of what is being studied versus seeking practical solutions to organisational problems. Research by Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2012), Balogun *et al.* (2013), and Nuntamanop *et al.* (2013) identified opportunities to improve the application of strategising practices. The opportunities will have positive effects on the organisation's competitive advantage (refer to Chapter 1 and Chapter 2).

### **6.6.2 New recruits into top management**

Twenty-eight per cent of the participants (or 9 out of the 33 cases) were considered as 'new' to the organisation, as they had only five years' experience in the retail organisation (refer to Chapter 5). The participants confirmed that the 'new recruits' were not affected by the same 'myopic thinking' prevalent in the organisation.

Data show that there is an opportunity to recruit top management with varied experience. This should be done in order to firstly, change the current strategising practices as research by Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) and research by Carter *et al.*, (2008) has shown; and secondly, Wang and Tseng (2015) have shown that to challenge the elements of culture, new thinking is needed (refer to Chapter 1, Chapter 2). However, the participants pointed out that the new recruits have 'less than one year' to influence the organisation to change, after which they are expected to 'toe-the-line',

The following reasons were put forward for recruiting externally versus promoting from within the organisation:

- New recruits could present a change in strategising practices (refer to Chapter 5). They could provide a new perspective on the current practices. They could improve the process of choice making, as suggested in research by Spiller (2012), and Nuntamanop *et al.* (2013). New recruits into top management could be efficient at choice making as they are not beholden to any historic consideration that the existing top managers have to consider (refer to Chapter 2). This could also improve top management's general decision-making ability, and close the gap between the expected theoretical outcome and the actual reality.

- Top management needed to challenge those elements of the organisational culture that require new thinking, and new recruits could be used as the 'change agents' required to realise this. Top management could learn new thinking by applying change management principles. However, it may be quicker to recruit new thinking. At the retail organisation, the majority of top management could not adapt because they had been in the organisation too long (refer to Chapter 5). New recruits could achieve far more with their new perspectives, as they would not be beholden to the historic limitations the organisation placed on its current top management.

Over 25% of the participants reported that the organisation had started applying a Conservative thinking style with the advent of the new CEO's influence. The top management referred to a 'professional' approach to retailing since the new CEO started. Moreover, the new HR executive was closely observing management when it came to applying performance related strategising practices. While these practices had been in existence before she arrived, the practices were now being monitored for effectiveness. Previously, performance related practices were merely a 'tick-box' exercise that top management completed without deep meaning and specific strategic relevance of skills development and knowledge transfer being attached to it (refer to Chapter 5).

The discursive practices previously applied could have delivered better succession planning, and could possibly have improved the upskilling of top managers for organisational survival. Previously, poor performance at top management level was 'given another chance' or 'moved to a less strategic position' (refer to Chapter 5).

The difficult task of terminating poor performers, non-essential employees or expensive executives, who were sometimes called 'lifers', based on their longevity at the organisation, was being seriously considered under the leadership helm of the 'newly recruited' HR executive and the 'newly recruited' CEO.

### **6.6.3 Theoretical Implications**

There were a number of strategising practices identified by Gomez and Bouty (2011) and Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2013) in the literature review in Chapter 2, which were not all used as strategising practices in the organisation. This could be based on the understanding that top management had of what constituted a 'strategising practice'.



This meant the following activities were incorrectly not considered as strategising practices:

- Training sessions as referenced in Chapter 5
- External academic courses are described in Chapter 1, as referenced by Balogun *et al.* (2013); Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2012);
- Performance management as referenced Chapter 5;
- Exposure to external stakeholders are described in Chapter 2, as referenced by Floris (2014) and Garreau *et al.* (2015); and
- Engagement with communities where customers were based.

Strategic tools were described by Burke and Wolf (2017) and by Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2012:3) (refer to Chapter 1). In the study, it was found that strategic tools were often mistaken as strategising practices. There was also very little recollection of the theory behind the use of these strategic tools (refer to Chapter 2). Top management applied these tools as a-matter-of-fact; with very little conscious connection to the theory, these tools represented (refer to Chapter 5). Research is required to understand how top management have integrated the use of strategic tools into their thinking styles.

Balogun *et al.* (2013) mention crisis management and Blasco (2012) as part of socialisation practices as discussed in Chapter 2. It was found that strategising practices and thinking styles came into sharp focus when there was a crisis situation (refer to Chapter 2, and Table 2.1). Goldman (2015) suggests that top management focus was affected and the manner in which resources were deployed became an acute issue in order to address a crisis issue (refer to Chapter 3). Crisis situations require the creation of an understanding of how top management use practice theory when considering societal constructs and other meanings behind the deployment of certain strategising practices during a pressurised situation (refer to Chapter 5).

The role of information technology (IT) as a strategising practice was briefly referred to by Vaara and Whittington (2012) (in Chapter 2), which some of the participants confirmed was a crucial tool and practice (refer to Chapter 5). More research is required to examine the role of IT as an enabler of strategising practices.

Other findings indicated that there was a communication gap in the flow of information between top management and middle management. This implies that 'talking' was a strategising practice, which Mitchel (2017) described as often equally weighted with

other discursive practices, whereas it should be given credence (refer to Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). Therefore, the study could add to the body of knowledge already accumulated on strategising practices by including the mastering of strategising practices, as both an ability and a characteristic, when profiling top management for recruitment.

Mental agility, as described by Betoret and Artiga (2014), especially in strategising, was identified as a skill requiring improvement and advancement (refer to Chapter 2). Past studies by Vance *et al*, (2007) competed with and at times contradicted one another in their presentation of valuable alternatives to rational and logical thinking for improving top management choice making (refer to Chapter 2). Empirical research in strategy management literature is required to study how continuous improvement, new perspectives, valuable alternatives and the changing environment shape practice theory.

The following section is the conclusion to the study, with brief summary from each chapter.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY**

There is an associated relationship between top management's strategising practices as informed by their thinking styles. This rapport of the units of observation led to the development of a profile of top management at the case organisation. Data from the study were analysed using mixed methods. The outcome is important, as it has brought 'strategising practices' from business sciences and 'thinking styles' from social sciences, into focus, as observed from a top management perspective.

- Chapter 1 - The study was introduced along with the research units of observation of thinking styles and strategising practices. The background and rationale of the subject were detailed. The research problem was clearly defined. One of the key outcomes of the chapter was Section 1.6 - where the research questions and research objectives were put forward to justify why the study was required.
- Chapter 2 - The literature chapter presented a critical review of strategising practices, and discussed the influence of top management's thinking styles on their choice making. The various thinking styles, such as the cognitive continuum theory, and mental self-government that leads to choice making were examined. The

literature review highlighted that mental agility in strategising is a skill that requires improvement and advancement (refer to Chapter 2). One of the key outcomes of the chapter was Section 2.2 – that showed the thinking theory that led to the choice of strategising practices.

- Chapter 3 - The second literature review: The context from which the research units of observation originated are presented, meaning that the chapter provided an introduction to practice theory. The relevance of the South African retail industry to the study was covered in detail, and this led to a discussion of the top management relevant to the study. One of the key outcomes of this chapter was Figure 3.2 – that showed a combined view of the context within which the study was set.
- Chapter 4 - In the methodology chapter, the research procedures, approach and methodology were discussed. The study was conducted in a number of sections. The issues of quantitative instrument reliability and validity were addressed. Issues of the interview's authenticity and trustworthiness were dealt with in detail in the chapter. The population and the sample size were defined. The methodology chapter was concluded with a review of the ethical considerations, issues of confidentiality and the required consent to conduct the study. One of the key outcomes was Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1 that detailed the methodology followed in the study and the sequencing of the instrument application.
- Chapter 5 - The data analysis. The demographic information that was collected was discussed. The research questions provided a structure to the statistical analysis of the quantitative section. The data derived from the qualitative methods was discussed in detail, linking back to the theme derived from the literature review of both Chapters 2 and 3. The findings from the data analysis were presented. The mixed data was triangulated and interpreted for meaning, specific to the study. One of the key outcomes of the chapter was presented in Section 5.6 - that summarised all the top management strategising practices, along with their thinking styles in one unified view to create a profile.
- Chapter 6 – The final chapter addressed the Research Objectives and systematically answered the Research Questions. The empirical study included a correlational analysis between measures of the seven strategising practices and the 13 thinking styles subscales. The rapport between the units of observation was

found to be associated with a low correlation. One of the key outcomes of the chapter was Figure 6.6 that summarised the research units of observation, the main theories applied and the main findings of the study.

The study builds on the previous practice theories and suggests that the environment plays a greater role in impacting the thinking styles of top managers than previously thought. The study adds to the body of knowledge in measuring the rapport between top management thinking styles and their choice of strategising practices as a valid scientific contribution to practice theory. There are practical implications to the study, especially by understanding how top management strategise and use strategising practices. A profile of top management at the case organisation was developed. The profile could help the organisation recruit a complementary skill set, within the top management team. This may provide an opportunity to improve the organisation's performance, which may ultimately lead to increased efficiencies, improved employment opportunities and the standardised application of strategising practices.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE SURVEY

APPENDIX A2 – Letter of Consent (updated by new HR Group Executive)

04 October 2016

University of South Africa  
PO Box 392  
Unisa  
0003



#### Letter of Consent – Research Surveys (Ervine Kekana)

This letter serves to confirm that Ervine Kekana, from our National Property Division, has been granted approval to conduct surveys with [REDACTED] Senior Management Team. This is to be completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for his Master of Commerce Degree in Business Management.

Interviews will be voluntary and confidential and the name of our organization must please not be made known.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ervine Kekana', written over a redacted area.



## APPENDIX B: LETTER TO DR ANGELA MURPHY

### APPENDIX B: DR. ANGELA MURPHY PERMISSION

#### PERMISSION TO REPLICATE

Dear Angela Murphy

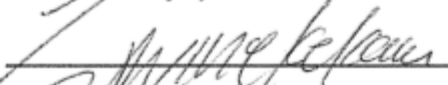
#### RE: A REPLICATION OF METHODOLOGY REQUEST

My name is Ervine Selati Litlhokoe Kekana, student number 32381271, cell 084 655 1818. I am a Masters student from the Department of Business Management at UNISA.

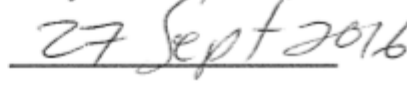
Your article: A COMPARISON OF THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THINKING STYLES OF STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT UNIVERSITY STUDY FIELDS (2006) has been highly informative and critical to my own research study into top management thinking styles

I am very much interested in replicating the methodology within the retail sector context. The purpose of my study is to look at an analysis of what shapes the thinking of senior management, how that impacts of the choice of strategising practices, what the correlation is and how all that influence the overall strategy. I humbly request that you share with me your research methodology and instrument so I may apply it to my research. All of my universities ethics and research standards will be observed, and citation will be properly acknowledged. I intend to carry on my studies at a doctoral level in the future and your assistance will be highly appreciated, now and in the future. Further, if there are opportunities for me to review the Retail Sector context in other matters you are involved in, I will equally oblige. Please note my study will involve anonymous surveys and some interviews.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. I will provide you with a summary of my findings on request. Please feel free to contact my supervisor, Karen Stander (PhD candidate) on email <standk@unisa.ac.za> on Tel: 0124292933 or my co-supervisor Professor Nisha Sewdass if there are any questions or comments regarding the study.



Signature



Date

KEKANA E S L 32381271@mylife.unisa.ac.za

**From:** Angela Murphy [mailto:Angela.Murphy@usq.edu.au]  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 31, 2015 4:02 AM  
**To:** Ervine Kekana  
**Subject:** RE: Student 3238 1271 MCOM UNISA South Africa

Hi Ervine

Thank you for reaching out to me. You are welcome to use anything I have. I have attached the link to the dissertation <https://usq.academia.edu/AngelaMurphy/Thesis>

And the article can be found here:

[https://www.academia.edu/2224382/Redefining\\_Trait\\_Models\\_of\\_Emotional\\_Intelligence\\_as\\_measuring\\_Emotional\\_Competence\\_A\\_Comparison\\_of\\_Ability\\_versus\\_Trait\\_EI\\_Methodologies](https://www.academia.edu/2224382/Redefining_Trait_Models_of_Emotional_Intelligence_as_measuring_Emotional_Competence_A_Comparison_of_Ability_versus_Trait_EI_Methodologies)

I wish you the best of luck for your study, don't hesitate to contact me if you need anything

Take care  
Angela

**Dr Angela Murphy**

Research Fellow, Australian Digital Futures Institute  
University of Southern Queensland  
Toowoomba | QLD | 4350 | Australia  
Ph: +61 7 4631 1844 | Email: [Angela.Murphy@usq.edu.au](mailto:Angela.Murphy@usq.edu.au)

## **APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

## APPENDIX C - INFORMED CONSENT

### TOP MANAGEMENT STRATEGIZING PRACTICES AND THINKING STYLES:

A case study of a South African retailers

Dear Participant

My name is Ervine Kekana, student number 32381271, cell 084 655 1818. I am a Masters' student from the College of Economic and Management Sciences at UNISA. I am also your colleague and work in the National Property Division. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. I have been granted permission at Group Executive level that I may engage with you on your strategising practices, see attached letter.

The purpose of my study is to look at what shapes the thinking of top management, how they choose their strategising practices and what correlation exists between these two variables. You have been selected as you are part of the top management structure of the organisation. Your input will be invaluable to me and the organisation. Benefits to you, as the participant are that your input may assist us to enhance how we approach future strategising.

I humbly request that you share your time with me in filling out a 20 minute questionnaire on your thinking styles. I also request permission to conduct a 20 minute interview with you. In order to ensure accuracy, I request to voice record the interview. Your participation is voluntary and that there are no penalties or loss of benefit for non-participation. Note that your details will remain anonymous. There are no potential risks as the necessary measures have been taken if injury or harm attributable to the study occurs. As I am a trusted member of the management team, I will not jeopardise this standing by being careless with the data collected from you. You may withdraw at any time without obligation to explain or incur adverse effects. There is no direct compensation/gifts/services for participating, nor is there any reimbursement and any costs incurred by you for participating.

All my university's ethics and research standards will be adhered to, and the citations will be acknowledged properly. To ensure high ethical standards and indemnity are maintained, your responses to the questionnaire and interview will be computed into numerical values; and quasi-experimental elements. These values focus on the interaction between the variables, that is cause and effect - *post hoc*. The gathered information will not be harmful to anyone. The results of the study will only be used for academic purposes, stored in secure storage for a period of five years and may later be published in an academic journal. On request, I will provide you with a summary of my findings.

Please feel free to contact my supervisor, Karen Stander (PhD candidate) by email <standk@unisa.ac.za> on Tel: 0124292933 or my co-supervisor Professor Nisha Sewdass if there are any questions or comments regarding the study.

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## APPENDIX D: INSTRUMENT – ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

## **APPENDIX D: Adaptation of the TSI (TSI)**

[Sternberg & Wagner (1992), as used by Murphy (2006) and adapted by the researcher]

### **Questionnaire**

Top Managers Strategising Practices and Thinking Styles:

A case study of a South African retailer

#### **SECTION A**

I am a Unisa postgraduate student in the College of Economic and Management Sciences, registered for a Master in Commerce degree - Business Management. This Questionnaire is part of my research for my master's dissertation. I request that you please share your time with me in filling out this 40 minute Questionnaire

The purpose of this study is to look at what shapes your thinking and how you choose your strategising practices. The research will study what correlation exists between your practices and your thinking style. You have been selected as you are part of the top management structure of the organisation. Your input will be invaluable to the research.

Please indicate below if you agree to participate and that you give consent to have your input used for this research?

A1

Yes, I agree to participate	No, thank you



## **SECTION B**

Please provide the following demographic information below. Note that your anonymity is guaranteed, the following information will merely help shape the background difference between various top management who have agreed to participate in this study.

B1 Please select your current level of responsibility?

A grade	B grade	C grade	Non-specific: A, B or C

B2 How many persons directly report to you?

1 or 2 direct reports	3 to 5 direct reports	6 to 10 direct reports	11 plus direct reports

B3 How many years have you been employed at the organisation that you work for?

1 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 plus

B4 Are you involved with the strategy of the organisation?

YES	NO (skip logic required to end the survey here)

B5 How are you involved with the strategy of the organisation?

I only implement strategy	I influence the direction of the strategy	I inform sections of the strategy	I directly input into the strategy

B6 How many years have you been involved with strategising at the organisation?

1 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 plus

B7 How often do you review plans department against the overall strategy of the organisation?

Once a year	Half yearly	Once a quarter	Monthly or less

B8 How are you involved with the strategising practices of your department?

Maintaining Practices	Applying some old Practices, but not all	Stopping old practices by updating & change	Generating new Practices

B9 Please list the various strategising practices that you use on a regular basis?

Episodic practices	a) Strategy meetings, quarterly reviews, b) Workshops, bi-annual reviews, c) Reviews, monthly standstills, d) Administrative practices, management reports, e) Filing, historic, financial year end books, and f) Emails, corporate communications.
Material practices	a) Strategic tools, b) Computers, cell phones, pagers, alarms, c) Desks, furniture, physical objects, utensils, stationery, d) Whiteboards, flipcharts, artefacts, e) Post-its, sms, WhatsApp, updates notices, f) Spreadsheets, systems, g) Telephones, communication tools) Digital representations, Work documents.
Artefacts	a) Photos, visual representation of vision, b) PowerPoint presentations, overhead projectors, c) Planning documents, flipcharts, d) Textual documents, official papers, e) Maps, location, and f) Posters, visual images
Praxis	a) Work flow, organogram, structure, b) Meetings, updates, performance reviews, c) Number crunching, budgeting, d) Analysing, reviewing, form filling, and e) systems method and procedures
Organisational norms	a) Behaviour, b) Talking, and c) conversations.
Context-specific socialisation practices	a) Meetings, weekly management meetings, b) Workshops, crisis management, c) Plans, short term goals, targets, tactics, d) Budgets, weekly, e) Procedures, day to day, f) Enacted ethics, practiced values, g) Frameworks, thematic use of tools, h) Scripted behaviour, accepted norms, i) Code of conduct, disciplined work, consequences, j) Language use, lingo, jargon specific to organisation, and k) Storytelling, legends, past glories, nostalgia
Discursive practices	a) Understanding the deep meaning of the strategy, b) Debating, managing and modifying the strategy, c) Agreeing to the strategy, d) Simplifying the strategy, e) Selling the strategy to all stake holders, and f) Communicating the strategy internally and externally.

## SECTION C

### Directions:

Read each statement carefully and decide how well it describes you. Use the scale provided to indicate how well the statement fits the way you typically do things at work. Make a cross next in the appropriate box of each question, indicating your choice between “1 and 7”. Cross under “1” if the statement does not fit you at all, that is, you almost never do things this way. Cross under “7” if the statement fits you extremely well, that is, you almost always do things this way. Use the values in between to indicate that the statement fits you in varying degrees.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not At All Well	Not Very Well	Slightly Well	Somewhat Well	Well	Very Well	Extremely Well

There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. Please read each statement and make the cross in the box of your choice, under the number on the scale next to the statement that best indicates how well the statement describes you. Please proceed at your own pace, but do not spend time on any one statement. If you have any questions, feel free to ask them now.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not At All Well	Not Very Well	Slightly Well	Somewhat Well	Well	Very Well	Extremely Well

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. When discussing or writing down ideas, I like criticising others' way of doing things.							
2. I prefer to deal with specific problems rather than with general question.							
3. I enjoy working on projects that allow me to try novel ways of doing thing.							
4. When making decision, I tend to rely on my own ideas and ways of doing things.							
5. When discussing or writing down ideas, I follow formal rules of presentation.							
6. When talking or writing about ideas, I stick to one main idea.							
7. When starting a task, I like to brainstorm ideas with friends or peers.							
8. I tend to base my decisions only on concerns important to my group or peers.							
9. When making a decision, I like to compare the opposing points of view.							
10. I like to set priorities for the things I need to do before I start doing them.							
11. I like situations or tasks in which I am not concerned with details.							
12. When faced with a problem, I use my own ideas strategies to solve it.							
13. In discussing or writing on a topic, I think the details and facts are more important than the overall picture.							
14. I tend to pay little attention to details.							
15. I like to figure out how to solve a problem following certain rules.							
16. I prefer tasks dealing with a single, concrete problem, rather than general or multiple ones.							
17. I like to control all phases of a project, without having to consult with others.							
18. I enjoy working on different tasks that are important to my peer group.							
19. I like situations where I can try new ways of doing things.							
20. I like to do things in ways that have been used in the past.							
21. I like to play with my ideas and see how far they go.							
22. I am careful to use the proper method to solve any problem.							
23. I like to deal with major issues or themes, rather than details or facts.							
24. I enjoy working on things that I can do by following directions.							
25. I like projects that allow me to look at a situation from a new perspective.							
26. In talking or writing down ideas, I like to have the issues organised in order of importance.							
27. I stick to standard rules or ways of doing things.							
28. I prefer to read reports for information I need, rather than ask others for it.							
29. When I have many things to do, I do whatever occurs to me first.							
30. I like to memorise facts and bits of information without any particular context.							
31. Before starting a project, I like to know the things I have to do and in what order.							
32. I like problems where I can try my own way of solving them.							
33. When trying to make a decision, I rely on my own judgment of the situation.							
34. I can switch from one task to another easily, because all tasks seem to me to be equally important.							
35. If I need more information, I prefer to talk about it with others rather than to read reports on it.							

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not At All Well	Not Very Well	Slightly Well	Somewhat Well	Well	Very Well	Extremely Well

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. If I need more information, I prefer to talk about it with others rather than to read reports on it.							
36. In a discussion or report, I like to combine my own ideas with those of others.							
37. In trying to finish a task, I tend to ignore problems that come up.							
38. When faced with opposing ideas, I like to decide which is the right way to do something.							
39. I care more about the general effect than about the details of a task I have to do.							
40. When working on a task, I can see how the parts relate to the overall goal of the task.							
41. I like situations where I can compare and rate different ways of doing things.							
42. When there are many important things to do, I try to do as many as I can in whatever time I have.							
43. When faced with a problem, I like to work it out by myself.							
44. I tend to break down a problem into many smaller ones that I can solve, without looking at the problem as a whole.							
45. When I'm in charge of something, I like to follow methods and ideas used in the past.							
46. When faced with a problem, I make sure my way of doing it is approved by my peers.							
47. I use any means to reach my goal.							
48. I like to check and rate opposing points of view or conflicting ideas.							
49. I like to collect detailed or specific information for projects on which I work.							
50. In dealing with difficulties, I have a good sense of how important each of them is and in what order to tackle them.							
51. I like situations where I can follow a set routine.							
52. When discussing or writing about a topic, I stick to points of view accepted by my peers.							
53. I like tasks and problems that have fixed rules to follow in order to complete them.							
54. I prefer to work on a project or task that is acceptable to and approved by my peers.							
55. I like situations where the role I play is a traditional one.							
56. When there are several important things to do, I do those most important to me and my peers.							
57. When discussing or writing down ideas, I stress the main idea and how everything fits together.							
58. I like projects that have a clear structure and a set plan and goal.							
59. When working on a task, I like to start with my own ideas.							
60. When there are many things to do, I have a clear sense of the order in which to do them.							
61. I like to participate in activities where I can interact with others as a part of a team.							
62. Before starting a task or project, I check to see what method or procedure should be used.							
63. In doing a task, I like to see how what I do fits into the general picture.							
64. I like to tackle all kinds of problems, even seemingly trivial ones.							
65. Before starting a task, I like to figure out for myself how I will do my work.							
66. When faced with a problem, I like to solve it in a traditional way.							
67. I like to work alone on a task or a problem.							
68. I tend to emphasise the general aspect of issues or the overall effect of a project.							
69. I like to follow definite rules or directions when solving a problem or doing a task.							
70. When discussing or writing down ideas, I use whatever comes to mind.							

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not At All Well	Not Very Well	Slightly Well	Somewhat Well	Well	Very Well	Extremely Well

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
71. When working on a project, I like to share ideas and get input from other people.							
72. I feel happier about a job when I can decide for myself what and how to do it.							
73. I like projects where I can study and rate different views or ideas.							
74. I like situations in which my role or the way I participate is clearly defined.							
75. When trying to make a decision, I tend to see only one major factor.							
76. I like problems where I need to pay attention to details.							
77. I like projects in which I can work together with others.							
78. I like situations where I can focus on general issues, rather than on specifics.							
79. I dislike problems that arise when doing something in the usual, customary way							
80. I like to challenge old ideas or ways of doing things and to seek better ones.							
81. When discussing or writing down ideas, I only like to use my own ideas.							
82. I like situations where I interact with others and everyone works together.							
83. I find that solving one problem usually leads to many other ones that are just as important.							
84. When making a decision, I try to take the opinions of others into account.							
85. I like working on projects that deal with general issues and not with nitty-gritty details.							
86. I like situations where I can use my own ideas and ways of doing things.							
87. If there are several important things to do, I do the ones most important to me.							
88. I like to take old problems and find new methods to solve them.							
89. I prefer tasks or problems where I can grade the designs or methods of others.							
90. When there are several important things to do, I pick the ones most important to my peer group.							
91. When faced with a problem, I prefer to try new strategies or methods to solve it.							
92. I like to concentrate on one task at a time.							
93. I like projects that I can complete independently.							
94. When trying to make a decision, I try to take all points of view into account.							
95. When starting something, I like to make a list of things to do and to order things by importance.							
96. I enjoy work that involves analysing, grading, or comparing things.							
97. I like to do things in new ways not used by others in the past.							
98. When I start a task or project, I focus on the parts most relevant to my peer group.							
99. I have to finish one project before starting another one.							
100. In talking or writing down ideas, I like to show the scope and context of my ideas, that is, the general picture.							
101. I pay more attention to parts of a task than to its overall effect or significance.							
102. I prefer situations where I can carry out my own ideas, without relying on others.							
103. I like to change routines in order to improve the way tasks are done.							
104. When I start on a task, I like to consider all possible ways of doing it, even the most ridiculous.							

## Closing

A. You are very involved in the overall organizational strategy. Your own business unit / department strategy is informed by the overall strategy. Based on Sternberg and Wagner (1992) TSI, APPENDIX E, you feel that your thinking style is \_\_\_\_\_.

Thinking styles categories and explanations	
FUNCTIONS	
Legislative style	The manager prefers tasks requiring creative strategies.
Executive style	The manager is more concerned with the implementation of tasks with set guidelines.
Judicial style	The manager focuses attention on evaluating the products of other's activities.
FORMS	
Monarchic style	The manager prefers tasks that allow complete focus on one thing at a time.
Hierarchical style	The manager prefers to distribute attention across several tasks that are prioritised.
Oligarchic style	The manager prefers to work toward multiple objectives during the same period of time, but without setting clear priorities.
Anarchic style	The manager prefers working on tasks that require no system at all.
LEVELS	
Local style	The manager prefers tasks requiring working with details.
Global style	The manager pays more attention to the overall picture regarding an issue and to abstract ideas.
SCOPE	
Internal style	The manager prefers being engaged in tasks that allow working independently.
External style	The manager prefers being engaged in tasks that provide opportunities for developing interpersonal relationships.
LEANINGS	
Liberal style	The manager prefers novelty and ambiguity.
Conservative style	The manager adheres to existing rules and procedures in performing tasks.
Source: Sternberg & Wagner (1992) - researcher replaced the individual with "the manager"	

B. I appreciate the time you took for this questionnaire. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know so that I can reflect the dominant thinking style of the organisation successfully?

C. I should have all the information I need. Would it be alright to call you if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I look forward to working with you towards improving the strategising process of the organisation



## APPENDIX E: THINKING STYLES CATEGORIES AND EXPLANATION

Thinking styles categories and explanations	
<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	
Legislative style	The manager prefers tasks requiring creative strategies.
Executive style	The manager is more concerned with the implementation of tasks with set guidelines.
Judicial style	The manager focuses attention on evaluating the products of other's activities.
<b>FORMS</b>	
Monarchic style	The manager prefers tasks that allow complete focus on one thing at a time.
Hierarchical style	The manager prefers to distribute attention across several tasks that are prioritised.
Oligarchic style	The manager prefers to work toward multiple objectives during the same period of time, but without setting clear priorities.
Anarchic style	The manager prefers working on tasks that require no system at all.
<b>LEVELS</b>	
Local style	The manager prefers tasks requiring working with details.
Global style	The manager pays more attention to the overall picture regarding an issue and to abstract ideas.
<b>SCOPE</b>	
Internal style	The manager prefers being engaged in tasks that allow working independently.
External style	The manager prefers being engaged in tasks that provide opportunities for developing interpersonal relationships.
<b>LEANINGS</b>	
Liberal style	The manager prefers novelty and ambiguity.
Conservative style	The manager adheres to existing rules and procedures in performing tasks.

Source: Sternberg & Wagner (1992) - researcher replaced the individual with "the manager"

## APPENDIX F: MANAGEMENT STRATEGISING PRACTICES

Episodic practices	a) Strategy meetings, quarterly reviews, b) Workshops, bi-annual reviews, c) Reviews, monthly standstills, d) Administrative practices, management reports, e) Filing, historic, financial year end books, and f) Emails, corporate communications.
Material practices	a) Strategic tools, b) Computers, cell phones, pagers, alarms, c) Desks, furniture, physical objects, utensils, stationery, d) Whiteboards, flipcharts, artefacts, e) Post-its, sms, WhatsApp, updates notices, f) Spreadsheets, systems, g) Telephones, communication tools) Digital representations, Work documents.
Artefacts	a) Photos, visual representation of vision, b) PowerPoint presentations, overhead projectors, c) Planning documents, flipcharts, d) Textual documents, official papers, e) Maps, location, and f) Posters, visual images
Praxis	a) Work flow, organogram, structure, b) Meetings, updates, performance reviews, c) Number crunching, budgeting, d) Analysing, reviewing, form filling, and e) systems method and procedures
Organisational norms	a) Behaviour, b) Talking, and c) conversations.
Context-specific socialisation practices	a) Meetings, weekly management meetings, b) Workshops, crisis management, c) Plans, short term goals, targets, tactics, d) Budgets, weekly, e) Procedures, day to day, f) Enacted ethics, practiced values, g) Frameworks, thematic use of tools, h) Scripted behaviour, accepted norms, i) Code of conduct, disciplined work, consequences, j) Language use, lingo, jargon specific to organisation, and k) Storytelling, legends, past glories, nostalgia
Discursive practices	a) Understanding the deep meaning of the strategy, b) Debating, managing and modifying the strategy, c) Agreeing to the strategy, d) Simplifying the strategy, e) Selling the strategy to all stake holders, and f) Communicating the strategy internally and externally.

Source: Adapted from Jarzabkowski *et al.*, (2013); Floris (2014) and Garreau *et al.*, (2015).

## APPENDIX G: INSTRUMENT – THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### The Interview schedule:

#### Top Management Strategising Practices and Thinking Styles:

#### A case study of a South African retailer

### SECTION A

I am a Unisa postgraduate student in the College of Economic and Management Sciences, registered for a Master in Commerce degree - Business Management. This Questionnaire is part of my research for my master's dissertation. I request that you please share your time with me in filling out this Interview.

The purpose of this study is to look at what shapes your thinking and how you choose your strategising practices. The research will study what correlation exists between your strategising practices and your thinking style. You have been selected as you are part of the top management structure at this organisation. Your input will be invaluable to the research.

Please indicate below if you agree to participate and that you give consent to have your input used for this research?

A1

Yes, I agree to participate	No, thank you.

Please indicate if I may voice record your answers? This will help me transcribe the exact words you use to communicate your strategising thoughts, which is pivotal to this study,

A2

Yes, I agree	No, thank you.

## SECTION B

Please provide the following demographic information below. Note that your anonymity is assured, and the following information will merely be used to help shape the background difference between the various top management who will be participating in this study.

B1 Please select your current grade of your responsibility?

A grade	B grade	C grade	Non-specific: A, B or C

B2 How many people directly report to you?

Zero or less than 2 people	3 to 5 people	6 to 10 people	11 plus people

B3 How many years have you been employed at the organisation?

1 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 plus

B4 Are you involved with strategising at the organisation?

YES	NO (skip logic required to end the survey here)

B5 If your answer above was yes, how are you involved with the strategy of the organisation?

I only implement the Strategy	I influence the direction of the strategy	I inform sections of the strategy	I directly input into the strategy

B6 How many years have you been involved with strategising at the organisation?

1 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 plus

B7 How often do you review your department plans against the overall strategy of the organisation?

Once a year	Half yearly	Once a quarter	Monthly or less

B8 How are you involved with the strategising practices of your department?

Maintaining Practices	Applying some old Practices, but not all	Stopping old practices by updating & changing	Generating new Practices

B9 Please list the various strategising practices that you use on a regular basis?

List Attached	
Episodic practices	a) Strategy meetings, quarterly reviews, b) Workshops, bi-annual reviews, c) Reviews, monthly standstills, d) Administrative practices, management reports, e) Filing, historic, financial year end books, and f) Emails, corporate communications.
Material practices	a) Strategic tools, b) Computers, cell phones, pagers, alarms, c) Desks, furniture, physical objects, utensils, stationery, d) Whiteboards, flipcharts, artefacts, e) Post-its, sms, WhatsApp, updates notices, f) Spreadsheets, systems, g) Telephones, communication tools) Digital representations, Work documents.
Artefacts	a) Photos, visual representation of vision, b) PowerPoint presentations, overhead projectors, c) Planning documents, flipcharts, d) Textual documents, official papers, e) Maps, location, and f) Posters, visual images
Praxis	a) Work flow, organogram, structure, b) Meetings, updates, performance reviews, c) Number crunching, budgeting, d) Analysing, reviewing, form filling, and e) systems method and procedures
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Discursive practices	a) Understanding the deep meaning of the strategy, b) Debating, managing and modifying the strategy, c) Agreeing to the strategy, d) Simplifying the strategy, e) Selling the strategy to all stake holders, and f) Communicating the strategy internally and externally.


The following questions are derived from the Chapter 3 on seminal works by researchers in the field of strategy and practices. The questions are simplified for ease of understanding, also to avoid use of complicated terms and academic language. I acknowledge that as a top manager, you were last in business school time back will not necessarily remember these academic terms. Let me begin by asking you some questions based on the following theories:

- the activity theory (explain theory to the respondent)
- Foucauldian theory (explain theory to the respondent)
- structuration theory (explain theory to the respondent)
- Bourdieusian theory (explain theory to the respondent)
- sense-making theory (explain theory to the respondent)
- the complexity theory, (explain theory to the respondent) and,
- critical discourse analysis (CDA) (explain theory to the respondent)

### **SECTION C**

- 1) The organisation has had a number of CEOs in the last 15 years. How do you think the various CEO strategising practices have affected your departments' practices? (Based on the Critical Discourse Analysis theory)

--

- 2) How are some of your strategising practices challenging? (Based on the Sensemaking theory)

--

- 3) How do you think some strategising practices in your department started?  
(Based on Bourdieusian theory)

- 4) How have you started new strategising practices? (Based on Bourdieusian theory)

- 5) How have you stopped an old practice? (Based on the activity theory)

- 6) How do you find common strategy areas with other departments? (Based on the structuration theory)

- 7) How do you think strategising in the organisation should be improved? (Based on the Complexity theory)



- 8) How do you think the strategising practices you have made available to your team are being used to deliver on the strategy? (Based on the Sensemaking theory)

- 9) How do use the key knowledge that exists within your team when you strategise? (Based on the Sensemaking theory)

- 10) How do you think cultural issues within the organisation inhibit the achievement of the strategy? (Based on the Foucauldian theory)

- 11) How would you change the current strategy? (Based on the Complexity theory)

Well, it has been a pleasure finding out more about your thinking styles and your choosing of strategising practices.

Before we end the interview, reflecting on each of the CEO the organisation has had in the past 15 years, what style on thinking would you say they had, based on the list below:

Thinking styles categories and explanations	
FUNCTIONS	
Legislative style	The manager prefers tasks requiring creative strategies.
Executive style	The manager is more concerned with the implementation of tasks with set guidelines.
Judicial style	The manager focuses attention on evaluating the products of other's activities.
FORMS	
Monarchic style	The manager prefers tasks that allow complete focus on one thing at a time.
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LEANINGS	
Liberal style	The manager prefers novelty and ambiguity.
Conservative style	The manager adheres to existing rules and procedures in performing tasks.
Source: Sternberg & Wagner (1992) - researcher replaced the individual with "the manager"	

CEO-1\_\_\_\_\_?

CEO-2\_\_\_\_\_?

CEO-3\_\_\_\_\_?

CEO-4\_\_\_\_\_?

CEO-5\_\_\_\_\_?

D. If you would like a Summary Report of the findings of this research, please provide your email address below:\_\_\_\_\_

E. I should have all the information I need, thank you for your time and input.

# APPENDIX I: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



## COLLEGE OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

12 April 2017

Dear Mr Ervine Kekana

Ref #: 2017\_CRERC\_003(FA)

Name of applicant: Mr E.S.L. Kekana

Staff number #: 32381271

**Decision: Ethics Approval**

**Name:** Mr Ervine S.L. Kekana, [32381271@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:32381271@mylife.unisa.ac.za), 0846551818

**Proposal:** Top managers strategising practices and thinking styles: A case study of a South African retailer

**Qualification:** MCOM

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted from **12 April 2017 to 12 April 2019**

**For full approval:** The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the CRERC on **12 April 2017**.

*The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:*

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the CRERC.*




University of South Africa  
Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

- 3) *An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*
- 4) *The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

**Note:**

The reference number **2017\_CRERC\_003(FA)** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the CRERC.

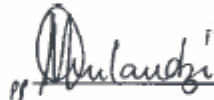
Kind regards,



---

**Prof JS Wessels**

Chairperson of the CRERC, CEMS, UNISA  
012 429-6099 or [wessejs@unisa.ac.za](mailto:wessejs@unisa.ac.za)



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**Prof M.T. Mogale**

Executive Dean: CEMS  
[mogalmt@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mogalmt@unisa.ac.za)



University of South Africa  
Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

## APPENDIX J: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT



Retha Burger  
S.A.(H.E.D.)

tel : 012 807 3864  
cell : 083 653 5255

fax : 012 807 3864  
e-mail : rethag@skillnet.co.za

Independent Skills Development Facilitator

Dear Mr Kekana

This letter is to record that I have completed a language edit of your dissertation entitled "Top management strategising practices and thinking styles: A case study of a South African retailer".

The edit that I carried out included the following:

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Pronoun matches
- Word usage
- Sentence structure
- Correct acronyms (matching your supplied list)
- Formatting
- Captions and labels for figures and tables
- Spot checking of ten in-text references
- Generation of Table of Contents, Lists of Figures and Tables

The edit that I carried out excluded the following:

- Content
- Correctness or truth of information (unless obvious)
- Correctness/spelling of specific technical terms and words (unless obvious)
- Correctness/spelling of unfamiliar names and proper nouns (unless obvious)
- Correctness of specific formulae or symbols, or illustrations.

Yours sincerely

**Retha Burger**

26 January 2018

## APPENDIX K: CODES FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

	Coding the interview respondents
	Table 5.3 describes the interview respondents who were interviewed. The first column is the sequenced numbers of the interviews. The second column indicates the number in which the respondents was interviewed.
1	Code 1 is an administrative first identifier to trace the original document used during the interview. The document is kept in a secure office, as per ethics standards.
2	Code 2 is a geographic identifier to indicate the where the respondents was interviewed. It also shows the area of responsibility and allows the data to be compared to other areas for consistency.
3	Code 3 is the initials of the respondents, (scrambled) only to be used to trace the logic of the data and will not be linked to the comments that they made about strategising practices of the various CEO - in order to abide by the confidentiality agreed to in the ethics application of this study.
4	Code 4 is the area of responsibility. It was important in this study to show how strategising practices were being applied across a diverse areas of the focal organisation.
5	The recordings of the study have been transcribed and kept secure.
6	The average time of the interview was between (40 and 47) minutes simply because the Respondents responded positively when they were asked to reference how they used strategising practices during their own careers. The subjective nature of the questions enticed them to share more. Some recordings were 100% not audible , either because they moved around the interview room or they mumbled their words.
7	There were some respondents who unfortunately did not give relevant insight into strategising practices and their input could not be used to answer any of the research questions.

## **APPENDIX L: PROFILE B -TOP MANAGEMENT THINKING STYLES AND STRATEGISING PRACTICES**

Respondent	Code 2	Code 3	Code 4	Recording	Time / mins	Audible / Clarity	Relevant Input	Quality rating	Dominant Thinking Style 1	Thinking Style 2 During Crisis	Perception of Organisation Thinking Style	Practices 1	Practices 2	Practices 3	Practices 4	Practices 5	Practices 6	Practices 7
1	P	VL	Corp	No	NA	No	Yes	3 out of 8	Oligarchic	Hierarchical	Conservative	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	Material	0	Praxis
2	P	BK	Corp	Yes	44	No	Yes	5 out of 8	Executive	External	Hierarchical	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	Praxis
3	P	S	Finance	Yes	33	No	No	3 out of 8	Local	Hierarchical	Internal	Context specific socialisation	0	Episodic	0	0	0	0
4	P	TC	Out	No	NA	No	No	2 out of 8	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	Praxis
5	P	AD	Out	No	NA	No	No	2 out of 8	Conservative	Conservative	Conservative	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	JHB	GK	GMD	No	50	No	Yes	5 out of 8	Executive	Executive	Executive		Discursive	0	0	0	0	Praxis
7	JHB	MB	Franchise	Yes	21	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal		0	Episodic	0	Material	0	Praxis
8	JHB	C	HR	Yes	54	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Liberal	Hierarchical	Anarchic	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	JHB	JW	Corp	Yes	90	Yes	No	7 out of 8	Judicial	Judicial	Judicial		Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
10	JHB	GG	Africa	Yes	78	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Executive	Local	Conservative		Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
11	PTA	JVZ	Ops	Yes	35	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Internal	Local	Executive		Discursive	Episodic	0	0	0	0
12	CT	IJ	Corp	Yes	34	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Executive	Executive	Executive		0	Episodic	Artefacts	Material	0	Praxis
13	Retired	IM	HR	Yes	98	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Global	Executive	Global		0	0	0	Material	0	0
14	JHB	CM	Corp	Yes	41	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Hierarchical	Conservative	Anarchic		Discursive	Episodic	0	0	0	0
15	JHB	DS	Corp	Yes	50	Yes	No	7 out of 8	Internal	Hierarchical	Executive		0	0	0	Material	0	Praxis
16	JHB	CR	Franchise	Yes	74	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Legislative	Hierarchical	Conservative		Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
17	JHB	CC	Corp	Yes	45	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Global	Executive	Judicial		Discursive	Episodic	0	0	0	0
18	JHB	DL	Africa	Yes	35	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Internal	Hierarchical	Executive	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	JHB	EG	Franchise	Yes	29	No	No	6 out of 8	Legislative	Executive	Executive		0	Episodic	0	0	0	0
20	JHB	WT	Ops	Yes	50	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Executive	Legislative	Anarchic	Context specific socialisation	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	CT	EVE	Corp	Yes	39	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Hierarchical	Executive	Internal		0	0	Artefacts	0	0	Praxis
22	CT	PH	Corp	Yes	70	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Hierarchical	Executive	Oligarchic	Context specific socialisation	0	Episodic	Artefacts	Material	0	0
23	CT	DM	Corp	No	50	No	Yes	6 out of 8	Judicial	Hierarchical	Local	Context specific socialisation	0	Episodic	0	Material	0	0
24	CT	AN	Ops	Yes	29	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Global	Hierarchical	Oligarchic	Context specific socialisation	Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
25	CT	CB	Corp	Yes	44	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Executive	Hierarchical	Internal		Discursive	Episodic	Artefacts	0	0	0
26	CT	MC	Clthng	Yes	55	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Internal	Liberal	Anarchic		0	Episodic	0	0	Organisational norms	0
27	CT	GL	Corp	Yes	33	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Executive	Executive	Executive		0	0	0	0	0	0
28	CT	MB	Clthng	Yes	21	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Executive	Hierarchical	Global		0	Episodic	Artefacts	0	0	Praxis
29	CT	SBA	Corp	Yes	40	No	Yes	7 out of 8	Legislative	Liberal	Conservative	Context specific socialisation	Discursive	0	Artefacts	0	Organisational norms	0
30	KZN	AG	Ops	Yes	36	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Executive	Hierarchical	Global		0	0	0	Material	0	0
31	GT	PK	Ops	Yes	50	Yes	Yes	8 out of 8	Global	Local	Monarchic	Context specific socialisation	Discursive	Episodic	0	0	0	0
32	GT	PR	Corp	Yes	50	Yes	Yes	7 out of 8	Executive	Executive	Executive		Discursive	0	0	0	0	0
					47,51724						63	13	12	13	6	8	2	9
												21%	19%	21%	10%	13%	3%	14%



## **APPENDIX M: PROFILE C - TOP MANAGEMENT THINKING STYLES AND STRATEGISING PRACTICES**

TSI >	Liberal	Conservative	External	Monarchic	Hierachica	Legislative	Executive	Internal	Global	Judicial	Anarchic	Oligarchic	Local
Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	1				5						11		
2		2					7						13
3		2			5						11		
4			3						9				
5		2			5						11		
6		2			5	6							
7					5		7	8					
8						6	7				11		
9					5		7					12	
10					5				9			12	
11					5		7	8					
12		2			5								
13	1	2				6							
14					5		7		15				
15				4					15				13
16		2			5			8					
17		2			5							12	
18			3		5		7						
19	1				5			8					13
20	1	2											
21		2					7						
22	1						7						
23	1									10			
24							7			10			
25							7	8					13
26					5			8		10			
27							7		9				
28						6	7	8					
29					5		7						13
30					5					10	11		
31	1							8	9				
32					5		7						
33						6	7			10			
	8	11	2	1	18	5	17	8	6	6	5	3	5
	8%	12%	2%	1%	19%	5%	18%	8%	6%	6%	5%	3%	5%
<b>KEY</b>													
Dominant style													
Crisis Management													
The Organisation													
Overlapping													